

THE NEWER  
SPIRITUALISM

FRANK PODMORE

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THE  
NEWER SPIRITUALISM

BY  
FRANK PODMORE

AUTHOR OF "MESMERISM AND CHRISTIAN SCIENCE," ETC., ETC.

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## INTRODUCTION

THE belief in intercourse with the spirits of the dead may be said to begin in modern times with Swedenborg. Prior to his time, indeed, alchemists and magicians believed themselves to have opened up communication with the world of spirits ; but the entities with whom they came into contact were conceived of as creatures of the elements, or spiritual beings parasitic on mankind. Again, throughout the Middle Ages the faithful found in witchcraft, in epileptic attacks, and in various epidemic visitations amongst religious communities, irrefragable proof of spirit-intervention. But the spirits concerned in such intervention seem rarely, if ever, to have had a human origin assigned to them ; they were regarded, not as the souls of dead men and women, but as Divine emissaries or as ministers of the powers of darkness.

The Swedish seer in his trances, however, professed to speak with the mighty dead of all ages. And though the belief in such intercourse as a practical possibility appears to have died out amongst his followers, they bore witness at any rate to the fact that the gates of heaven and hell had once, in modern times, been opened to a mortal visitor. Swedenborg's revelations had, moreover, a far-reaching influence outside the narrow circle of his professed disciples. Trances of like character to his own were found to

occur in connection with the practice of animal magnetism ; and in the first half of the nineteenth century "magnetic" clairvoyants in every civilised country claimed to hold converse with those who had passed beyond the barrier of death, and to reveal the secrets of the spiritual world. The claims of the clairvoyants, and the ready credence afforded to their revelations, were equally the direct outcome of the teachings of the Swedish seer. As the practice of mesmerism spread, it was found that the liability to fall into trances, and with it the power of holding communication with the spirit world, was not a privilege confined, as the Swedenborgians would have it, to a few chosen souls, or even necessarily associated with any marked pre-eminence in moral or intellectual endowment. In the United States, at all events, towards the middle of last century, the nascent spiritualism showed signs of becoming a thoroughly democratic movement.

An accidental circumstance set fire to the train thus prepared ; and the new movement overran, like a flame, the whole continent of America. Bewitched children and magnetic clairvoyants had always been prone to enhance the effect of convulsions and trances by marvels of a more material kind—there would be vomiting of pins, throwing of gravel, or surreptitious introduction of flowers and sacred relics, according to the taste of the performer and the demands of the environment. An exhibition of a like kind broke out in 1848 in the village of Hydesville, New York. Two little girls produced raps on their wooden bedstead—in the first instance, doubtless, by the time-honoured method of scratching it with their toes. Later, more

subtle methods were introduced ; others took up the pastime and refined upon it. Dark séances were held, and musical instruments flew about the room ; the spirits spoke and wrote, and even showed themselves in bodily form. The movement spread to Europe in the early fifties ; and by 1870 there was scarcely a town of any importance in the civilised world which did not boast its regular circle of "inquirers," whilst upwards of a hundred periodicals devoted themselves to chronicling the doings of the spiritual world, as revealed in the séance-room and in "inspirational" lectures. The movement remained at its zenith for a few years, and then rapidly declined. Those, indeed, who had once been convinced remained for the most part convinced believers still. But the faith of such as were still in their novitiate was seriously checked by the constant exposure of fraud at materialisation séances, in spirit photography, and other marvels of the kind. And the decline of the belief was hastened by the increased attention given by medical men and others to the obscure mental states from which the belief in the first instance had its rise. Men saw that the outpourings of the entranced subject and the revelations of the crystal and of planchette could reasonably be classed with other manifestations of automatism and unconscious cerebration ; and that to invoke spiritual agency would, in most cases, be as rational as to ascribe the ravings of delirium to demoniac possession, or the journeyings of the sleep-walker to angelic guidance.

In the decade of 1880 to 1890 the belief in intercourse with spirits of the dead seemed rapidly approaching its euthanasia. The renewed vigour of

the movement during the last twenty years is derived mainly from three sources : the trance revelations of the American medium, Mrs. Piper ; the physical manifestations of the Italian medium, Eusapia Palladino ; and the labours in interpreting and correlating these and other manifestations undertaken for many years by the late Frederic W. H. Myers, the results of which were gathered together in the two massive volumes of his " Human Personality." <sup>1</sup>

In this, his posthumous work, Myers does not indeed disdain whatever support may be derived from the trance utterances and the physical phenomena. But in both directions the evidence has been so multiplied since his death that it will be necessary to devote the bulk of this book to its discussion. Myers' peculiar contribution to the subject may be considered more briefly, not, indeed, as being less important, but because the nine years which have elapsed have brought nothing to strengthen his position. Briefly, Myers essayed to lift the whole problem of man's immortality to a higher level, and propounded an argument of far wider scope, whose cogency we are hardly yet in a position accurately to estimate.

To the older philosophers the mind of man seemed a thing apart—a clear-cut, indissoluble unity, whose permanence and identity admitted neither doubt nor degree. To the newer experimental psychology the unity of consciousness is a mere illusion ; it is even as the " elementary " nature of air, earth, and water, the unreasoned judgment of ignorance. The laboratory and the alienist's clinique show that consciousness in

<sup>1</sup> " Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death." London : Longman & Co., 1903.

the last analysis is but the casual and transitory co-ordination of countless ill-defined and variable elements. Consciousness, in fact, is but the imperfect reflection in the psychical world of the whole activity of the cerebro-spinal nervous system ; and that system is itself a collection of separate nerve-centres, which represent the multiform activities of the whole organism. Consciousness, then, is but the reflection of a reflection ; it represents all the innumerable doings and sufferings of each part of the body, much as, to employ Ribot's simile, a map represents the features of a countryside. To found an argument for the survival of the soul on the supposed unity and indissolubility of this shifting aggregation must seem indeed the building of a house upon the sand.

Now, the peculiar contribution of Myers to modern psychology lies here. He accepts to the full the results of recent research. He recognises that human consciousness, as we know it, is a highly composite and unstable thing, having neither completeness nor essential unity. Consciousness is, to employ his own simile, a selection, like the visible spectrum, accidental, interrupted, and variable, from a much larger potential whole. But at this point Myers' views diverge from those of the recognised schools. To him the surface consciousness, the only thing which we know as consciousness in ordinary life, is comparatively unimportant. "I award no primacy," he writes, "to my ordinary waking self, except that, among many potential selves, this one has shown itself the fittest to meet the needs of common life." It is the hidden life which counts—the self which the struggle of the market-place and the senate has thrust



back into the darkness, or has not yet called into conscious activity.

“There is in each of us,” he proclaims, “an abiding, psychical entity far more extensive than he knows—an individuality which can never express itself completely through any corporeal manifestation. . . . All this (unexpressed) psychical action is unconscious, all is included in an actual and potential memory below the threshold of our habitual consciousness.”

The subliminal consciousness, he supposes, may embrace a far wider range, both of physiological and of psychical activity, than is open to normal personality. The invisible spectrum of consciousness stretches indefinitely in either direction, extending on the one side to physiological processes which have long dropped out of human knowledge, on the other to supernormal faculties, of which only stray hints have reached us in our present stage of evolution. Conformably with this view, a stream of consciousness flows like an underground river within us; sleep is no longer to be regarded as the mere abeyance of waking activities, but as a phase of personality with characteristics definitely its own; crystal vision, the hypnotic trance, hysteria, and allied states open a door into the hidden life; and the improvisations of genius are outbursts of subterranean forces.

Now, this theory claims to be founded on induction from observed facts. There are indications, however, that in its author's mind the conception owed less to induction than to analogy. There is a class of hysterio-epileptic patients to be found in the Paris hospitals, whose remarkable symptoms have been described by Charcot, Jules Voisin, Bourru, and especially



by Pierre Janet. A typical case is that of Lucie, sometime a patient of Professor Janet. This unhappy young woman had a terrible fright at the age of nine, which brought on a series of severe epileptic attacks. At the time when she first came under observation in the hospital she was almost completely anæsthetic. She had no sense of touch and no muscular sense. She would "lose her legs in bed," as she herself described it, and could only walk by looking at the ground and at her limbs. She was very deaf; and her sight, her most serviceable sense, was extremely defective. Lastly, the memory of a great part of her past life was a blank: she had no recollection of her childhood before the age of nine. But when thrown into the deepest stage of the hypnotic trance a marked change would be observed. She could now feel her limbs, and walk without looking at her feet or the floor. Her powers of vision would become practically normal. Concurrently with this enfranchisement of the senses was observed a corresponding enlargement of the memory. She would not only be conscious of all her life as a hospital patient, but she could remember also the first nine years of her childhood, and give a clear account of the terrible fright which brought on her calamity.<sup>1</sup>

Now, close observation brings to light some curious facts about the condition of these hystero-epileptics. It would be a grave mistake to suppose that their anæsthesia is merely feigned. But it is certainly less profound than the anæsthesia which results from disease or from actual severance of the nerves. It can occa-

<sup>1</sup> P. Janet, "L'Automatisme Psychologique," pp. 104, 105.

sionally be restored by directing the patient's special attention to the anæsthetic limb. And it is noteworthy, Janet points out, that hysterico-anæsthetic subjects are not liable to get their limbs burnt or otherwise injured, as is the case with patients, *e.g.*, in the later stages of leprosy. Again, a patient in whom the visual field is hysterically restricted will not see ordinary objects held outside the hysteric limits of vision ; but he can be sent into convulsions if any object of special significance for him be held outside those limits, but within the normal visual field. The real self, then, of these hysterics is still active below the surface, and is still able to keep watch and ward over the vagaries of the starved consciousness.

To Myers the fate of these poor hysterico-epileptics seems profoundly significant.

“ Might not,” he asks, “ all the hysteric tale be told, *mutato nomine*, of the whole race of mortal men? What assurance have we that from some point of higher vision we men are not as these shrunken and shadowed souls? ” (i. p. 67.)

In that larger potential consciousness which, as we have warrant for inferring, surrounds the narrowed personality which suffices for our common everyday life, he believed himself to discern traces of faculties too large for merely terrestrial needs, and signs of a guiding power wise with more than human foresight. This, in effect, is Myers' case. There need be no fear, he proclaims, lest the soul of man should be disintegrated with the disintegration of the body ; because it exhibits

“ traces of faculty which this material or planetary life could not have called into being, and whose exercise even

here and now involves and necessitates the existence of a spiritual world" (i. p. 11).

The argument may be admitted to have cogency if the premises can be established. But what in fact is this so-called "subliminal self," and what are its chief properties? Certain pathologic cases—Félida X., whose history has been recorded by Dr. Azam, Mary Reynolds, chronicled by Dr. William James, the three "Misses Beauchamp," of Morton Prince, &c.—show that there may exist, below the personality presented to us in ordinary life, another personality, larger, freer, and saner. In subjects who have been frequently hypnotised the personality which is evoked by the operator in the trance will often prove more intelligent and alert than the waking self, and may show keener and more exalted powers of sensation. The hypnotic memory, too, is, as a rule, wider than the waking memory. Again, we have evidence in the many striking manifestations of the "post-hypnotic promise" that this hidden personality may exercise just such a potent influence on the subject's waking hours as the hidden personality of the hystero-anæsthetic is presumed to exercise; and the source of the influence will be as completely hidden from the normal self in the one case as in the other. It is a commonplace for the student of hypnotism that, within limits, it is possible to guide a waking subject's thoughts and actions in blind obedience to a programme laid down for him in a previous state of trance. He will go the predestined journey, or make the pre-ordained fatuous remark, and will not even suspect that his thought and action have any other source than his own free choice or the inspiration of the moment.

You may even pervert his present perceptions or his memory of the past. Such an one, in fulfilment of a forgotten compact, will swear that his dwarf Japanese maples are fig-trees, or will claim a past acquaintance, substantiated by full details of time and place, with a perfect stranger.

But the secondary personality in the case of Félicité X. and the "Misses Beauchamp" is obviously the product of pathologic conditions, whilst in the hypnotic subject it seems probable that it is simply the result of training. Apart from these special cases, and from a few sporadic instances of latent faculty emerging in dreams, or through planchette and the crystal, there is scanty support for the assumption of a hidden personality in man. There is little evidence, in other words, that, in normal persons, there is below the surface any sequence of memories or separate form of consciousness, so far organised or so stable as to deserve the name of a secondary personality; and there is still less evidence of interference with the operations of the work-a-day self by any such subterranean agencies.

To put it briefly, the manifestations of the secondary consciousness, automatism, the subliminal self, or whatever else we choose to call it, so far as at present ascertained, can be adequately explained up to a certain point in terms of physiology. We are apparently concerned, in most cases, merely with the functioning of lower cerebral centres, or the revivification of dormant tracts of cerebral tissue; possibly, in such cases as Félicité X. and Ansel Bourne, with the setting up and removal of inhibitory processes. Most of the facts find a sufficient explanation in physiological terms—

except the fact of consciousness itself. But no conclusive results can be looked for by approaching the problem exclusively from this side. For the physical explanation is, of course, largely conjectural, and is apt to fail us just when we need it most. Moreover, it is Myers' contention that the subterranean consciousness contains psychical facts which are not also brain facts—that is, psychical facts which have no correlates in what we know as the material world; and it is easier to appraise the evidence for the existence of such psychical facts than to attempt to prove or disprove the existence of any cerebral processes corresponding with them. That is the point to which we must now address our argument.

Argument in this region may, no doubt, be helped by analogy. But the analogy must not be pressed too much in detail. From this point of view Myers' own metaphor of the spectrum needs discreet handling. The spectrum as we know it is but a segment of a long series of waves, differing each from the other only in amplitude. Between the first visible red ray, or the last visible violet, and the nearest ray outside the spectrum in each case, the physical difference is expressible only in infinitesimal fractions of wave length. There is nothing in external nature corresponding with the difference, for the human observer, between light and darkness. Light is merely the result of the adaptation—the accidental adaptation, it may be said—of certain wave lengths to the structure of the human retina. Now, this metaphor of the spectrum carries with it, almost inevitably, the implication that the surface consciousness bears the same kind of relation to the potential consciousness that the visible



spectrum does to the whole gamut of ethereal vibrations—that, in other words, our actual consciousness is an arbitrary selection, not corresponding with any fundamental difference in the psychical elements of which it is composed. The metaphor here ceases to be a mere metaphor, and has leaped into the place of a theory. If we are to argue by analogy, it is safer to vary the illustration as much as possible, in order to avoid the chance of being so misled.

The human mind, then, may be compared with a house, of which consciousness serves as the reception-room. At the stage of evolution which our hypothetical dwelling has reached the single primitive apartment, which served for eating, sleeping, and living in, has disappeared, and separate rooms have been assigned for these several functions. The furniture of the kitchen and bedroom are useful, indispensable indeed ; but they are no longer displayed for social purposes. In such a house search in the attics or the lumber-room might bring to light now and again curious and antiquated things, some of them even now good enough for the drawing-room. But groping in the dust-bin after jewels would be likely to prove unprofitable. And few houses contain a secret treasure-chamber. The metaphor is a homely one ; but it will serve to suggest another aspect of the case. It is to the kitchen and the dust-bin, more often than to the treasure-chamber, that expeditions into the sub-conscious lead the investigator. For what do we find when we pass out from the reception-room of consciousness? At the outset all parties are agreed. In sleep, in the hypnotic trance, and in other sub-conscious conditions we find much that is fragmentary and



chaotic—lapsed and rejected impressions which represent the mere debris of the waking life. We find also definite enlargements of faculty. There is often an exaltation of some particular sense ; there is very generally a marked heightening of the pictorial imagination, amounting frequently to genuine hallucination. Further, the patient in the hypnotic trance frequently acquires new powers over the organism. The most familiar example of this is the condition of insensibility to pain. But the organism can be influenced in many other ways. The digestion and other organic functions can be stimulated ; the circulation can be directed and controlled, so that inflammations may be reduced, or, in pathologic cases, sham tumours and even stigmata may be formed. In particular, the skin can be readily affected ; some of the most conspicuous triumphs of suggestion have consisted in the cure of obstinate skin diseases.

In all this it is permissible to conjecture that we are reverting to a more primitive stage of consciousness, that we are regaining partial control over organic processes which have long since escaped from the guidance of civilised man. We have, in fact, penetrated to the kitchens. But there are other remarkable powers occasionally associated with these sub-conscious states, which are of more doubtful interpretation. There is a curious power of what can best be described as "spatial memory," an illustration of which was quoted by Huxley some thirty years since, in a famous article on Human Automatism. Huxley cited the case of a soldier who had suffered some injury to the brain, which induced occasional accesses of automatism. In the automatic state he would write from dictation,

without looking at the paper, and would be able to correct what he had written, crossing the t's and dotting the i's with perfect accuracy, though a sheet of cardboard were interposed between his eyes and the writing. Similar observations have been made on hypnotic subjects by William James and others. The power is possibly to be explained as a special development of the muscular sense.

Again, there is a remarkable faculty of estimating with accuracy the lapse of time possessed by many hypnotic subjects. This may possibly be due in simpler cases to a quickened perception in the trance state of some organic rhythm. But such an explanation will hardly apply to the remarkable observations recorded by Dr. J. Milne Bramwell. Dr. Bramwell made a number of experiments in giving a post-hypnotic suggestion to be fulfilled after a considerable interval—the interval being expressed in minutes, so as to involve subliminal processes of calculation. Thus, to take a single instance, Miss A<sup>1</sup> was told in the hypnotic trance that, at the expiration of 11,470 minutes, wherever she might happen to be, she should make a cross on a piece of paper and note down the exact time at which she did it. Miss A<sup>1</sup> had no recollection in the waking state of any such suggestion being given; nor was she even conscious, either in the hypnotic or the normal state, of ever having made the somewhat prolonged calculation required to find out the actual time. Yet, out of fifty-five experiments made with this one subject, forty-five were completely successful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An account of the experiments will be found in Dr. Bramwell's "Hypnotism" (1903), pp. 119—34.

It is difficult to suppose that this curious power is merely the remains of a lost faculty, crowded out in the struggle for life. Still more remarkable is the case of the calculating boys, dealt with pretty fully by Mr. Myers.<sup>1</sup> The power of extracting cube roots and calculating logarithms at sight can at no period have been a common endowment of the race. By what strange freak of evolution does it then from time to time make its appearance in children and unlettered peasants? The fact should, at any rate, warn us that we are not yet in a position to dogmatise on the nature of sub-conscious mentation.

So far we have cited phenomena which, if not yet sufficiently familiar to be included in scientific systems, are yet coming to be tacitly accepted. But we now approach yet more dubious matters. It is on the supposed existence of a group of transcendental faculties—telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and the like—that Myers in the last analysis based his belief in the soul's immortality. It is hardly necessary to say that these faculties have not yet been admitted to the rights of citizenship in the republic of science, though one of them has filed a petition of naturalisation. Let us examine first the claims of this aspirant, telepathy.

Obviously there are two questions to be answered in this connection. First, can one mind act upon another without the intervention of the senses? and, second, does such a power, if it exists, point to a transcendental explanation? Myers was quite clear on both points. Telepathy does exist, and it is transcendental in its nature.

“ Believe though we may in the ultimate continuity of all existence and operation, there is still a vast and sudden

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. i. p. 79, *seq.*

separation—unbridgeable at present by any hypothesis of ethereal vibrations or the like—between the smallest act of telepathic transmission and all that we have previously known concerning matter and motion . . . we have here for mortal minds the Rubicon between the mechanical and the spiritual conceptions of the Universe” (i. 24).

Now, the main evidence for the operation of this presumed faculty of telepathy consists of experiments in which the two parties to the transfer, the agent and the percipient, were in the same room, or, at any rate, within a few yards of each other. Many series of successful experiments in the transference of ideas and sensations have been conducted under these conditions. The classic experiments of the kind are those carried on in 1889 and 1890 by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, with the assistance of the late Professor Sidgwick and others. Some thousands of trials were made, and a high degree of success was obtained in transferring simple images, such as numerals, or even more complicated pictures, from the mind of the agents. But it was found that a slight increase in the distance exercised a marked effect on the result.

These results accord with the experience of other investigators. There have been a few isolated instances, and a few short series of experiments, in which it is claimed that definite ideas of numbers, objects, or pictures have been telepathically transferred between agent and percipient when separated by distances varying from hundreds of yards to hundreds of miles. But when we remember the habitual inaccuracy of untrained investigators, and the various sources of error in experiments of this kind, together with the practical certainty that the successes reported, even if recorded

with perfect accuracy, bear but an infinitesimal proportion to the unrecorded failures, it is impossible to assign much weight to these sporadic instances of "thought-transference at a distance." The only series of experiments at a distance comparable—by reason of the competence of the observers, the care with which the trials were conducted, and the precision of the results—with the Brighton experiments of Mrs. Sidgwick are the experiments carried on at Havre in 1885 and 1886 by Dr. Gibert and Professor Janet. The subject was Madame B.—better known to the world at large through her later experiences as "Léonie"; the distance varied from a quarter of a mile to a mile; the effect aimed at was the induction of the hypnotic trance. A fair amount of success was obtained; and the results certainly go some way to prove that telepathic influence can, under favourable circumstances, operate over a considerable interval of space. But, even if we admit that the result was not due to unconscious expectation on the part of the percipient, we have still something very different from the transfer at close quarters of a complex visual or auditory image.

In some recent experiments undertaken by Miss Clarissa Miles and Miss Gwendolen Ramsden the agent and percipient were separated by a much greater distance, varying from twenty to three hundred miles or more; and there appears to be evidence of the transmission of such complex images as portions of a building and real scenes. The experiments were conducted and recorded with care, each lady writing down her experience on a postcard despatched on the day of the experiment. And the correspondence



between the impressions of the two parties was in many cases fairly precise.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as shown in a later chapter, there are some instances of "cross-correspondence" between the scripts of various automatists, which appear to involve telepathy over a distance measured by thousands of miles. But this recent evidence, however good of its kind, is hardly yet sufficient in bulk wholly to overthrow, though it may be admitted to weaken, the presumption derived from the Brighton experiments. In his recent work, "The Survival of Man"—the only authoritative pronouncement on the evidence as a whole since Myers' book—Sir Oliver Lodge recognises that the experimental evidence is not yet sufficient to substantiate the non-physical nature of telepathy.<sup>2</sup>

Arguing from experimental results alone, then, we are not yet justified in claiming a transcendental origin for telepathy, even if we admit it as a fact in nature. There are presumed to be molecular disturbances in brain-tissue corresponding with each act of thought; there may be ethereal vibrations set up by these various changes, which may bring about corresponding changes in brains somehow attuned. The prejudicial effect on the results of even a slight increase of distance suggests a physical explanation on some such lines as these. It would be quite in harmony with a physical explanation that, whilst the shallow and strictly localised vibrations corresponding with an image summoned up *ad hoc* (a playing-card or number or

<sup>1</sup> See the accounts of these recent experiments in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. pp. 60, *seq.*; and *Journal S.P.R.* for June, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 116.



diagram) should be rapidly extinguished as the distance increases, the more massive and deep-seated vibrations corresponding with the agent's conception of his own personality should make their influence more widely felt. And there, if we had only the experimental evidence, the matter would end.

But another large class of phenomena has been subsumed under the category of telepathy, a class of which the common stories of apparitions at the time of death may be taken as the type. The distance here appears to be immaterial ; the percipient and the dying man may be separated by the whole diameter of the earth. Now, we may be justified—speaking for myself, I think we are justified—in attempting to correlate these phenomena with those. But we are bound to recognise, in the first place, that we are dealing with evidence of a very different quality. The evidence for thought-transference at close quarters is experimental ; and the experiments have been conducted by such competent investigators as Mrs. Sidgwick, Edmund Gurney, Professor W. F. Barrett, Sir Oliver Lodge, Pierre Janet, Charles Richet, and others of like calibre. Yet, even so, it is still a claimant for scientific recognition. But the evidence for apparitions at death depends upon observation, and upon the observation of untrained, often of ignorant and credulous, witnesses ; there are very few contemporary records, and the evidence is subject to all the defects of observation, memory, and narration in persons unused to observe or describe with accuracy. Moreover, the emotions are so deeply engaged that accurate accounts are in many cases hardly to be looked for. Whilst, therefore, the attempt to correlate the two classes of pheno-

mena is perhaps legitimate, we can hardly be justified in making the spontaneous phenomena the basis of a theory of telepathy.

On the naturalistic view, the apparitions of the dying, if they really do occur, and are not altogether to be explained by unconscious perversion of testimony, are simply telepathically induced hallucinations. What is transferred from the mind of the dying man to the percipient is, on this view, just a vague, massive feeling of the agent's personality—that and nothing more. The vibrations started by this feeling (for it has in it, *ex hypothesi*, more of emotional than of intellectual quality), impinging on the percipient's brain, give rise to the idea of his friend, which is thereupon clothed in hallucinatory form. Briefly, the apparition seen is purely subjective ; it is only the impulse which caused it to be projected which can claim a source external to the percipient's mind. If it is thought inconceivable that a primitive massive feeling of that kind should have power to penetrate to so great a distance, the alternative is, not to subvert our theory of telepathy, but to leave apparitions of the dying on one side. Considered by themselves, they hardly carry weight enough to count ; it is only because of their presumed kinship with the manifestations of experimental telepathy that they have any claim to be heard at all.

Myers' own procedure is the precise reverse of that above indicated. In building up his theory he starts with the more sensational and more dubious phenomena, and works backwards to those which are simpler and better attested. Consider the following passage :

“ In this world of vibrations it may seem at first the simplest plan to invoke a vibration the more. But in the

case of telepathy the analogy which suggests this explanation, the obvious likeness between the picture emitted (so to say) by the agent and the picture received by the percipient—as when I fix my mind on the two of diamonds, and he sees a mental picture of that card—goes but a very short way. One has very soon to begin assuming that the percipient's mind *modifies* the picture despatched from the agent; until the likeness between the two pictures becomes quite a symbolical affair. We have seen that there is a continuous transition from experimental to spontaneous telepathy; from our transferred picture of a card to monition of a friend's death at a distance. Mere monitions may indeed be pictures of the dying friend; but they are seldom such pictures as the decedent's brain seems likely to project in the form in which they reach the percipient. Mr. L.—to take a well-known case in our collection—dies of heart disease when in the act of lying down undressed in bed. At or about the same moment Mr. N. J. S. sees Mr. L. standing beside him with a cheerful air, dressed for walking and with a cane in his hand. One does not see how a system of undulations could have transmuted the physical facts in this way" (i. 245).

How the vision of Mr. L. is to be explained on the naturalistic view I have already indicated. Myers' own explanation is, by the plain man, hardly to be distinguished from the primitive conception of a ghost, as a thing tangible and having form and parts and magnitude; though he himself would, I believe, have repudiated the comparison. He supposed, at any rate, that persons whose apparitions are thus rendered visible have a "psychorrhagic diathesis"—that is, are so constituted that some portion of the soul or psyche may actually leave the body at moments of crisis, may travel through space, and may make its presence visible at a distant spot. In his own words:

"I still believe—and more confidently than in 1886—that a psychical invasion does take place; that a

phantasmo-genetic centre is actually established in the percipient's surroundings ; that some movement bearing some relation to space as we know it is actually accomplished ; and some presence is transferred, and may or may not be discerned by the invaded person " (i. 247).

This theory, as said, is founded on the least authentic part of the evidence at hand. But, in fact, out of a dubious and sensational class of phenomena, Myers chose precisely the most sensational and most dubious instances to form the foundation-stones of his edifice. Apparitions at death, such as the case just quoted—the momentary vision by a solitary percipient of a dying man dressed as his friend was accustomed to see him—belong to a fairly well established type. Stories of this kind are sufficiently numerous and congruent to command attention. It is not, however, on such as these that the transcendental theory is based ; but rather on sporadic cases of apparitions seen by several persons at once ; of apparitions seen, not by friends, but by uninterested strangers standing near ; of the dying man and his friend reciprocally visiting and seeing the other. If the whole class barely wins recognition, what weight is to be attached to such outlying and aberrant types, supported as they commonly are by evidence imperfect, scanty, and remote in date? However honest the narrators, it is impossible to attach much credence to details, especially to melodramatic details, in narratives of this kind.

But if apparitions of the dying, and other kindred phenomena, are only worth considering because of their possible connection with experimental thought-transference, what is to be said of clairvoyance, precognition, retrocognition, and the other transcendental modes

of perception? The evidence in these cases is very much weaker. It is less in quantity; it is inferior in the accuracy of the records—there are only one or two cases of prophecy, for instance, noted down before the event; the testimonies quoted are frequently vague and often of ancient date; and there is no experimental evidence to support the claim. The last statement, indeed, requires some qualification. There is a good deal of testimony, in the works of the early mesmerists, for what is called “clairvoyance at close quarters”—the vision of objects enclosed in boxes, or placed behind screens, and so on. It has been the lot of the present writer to examine all the best available records of this kind; to weigh the evidence, and to find it in every case wanting. Sometimes the results might be explained by thought-transference; more commonly they are, as in certain recent experiments at which I have assisted, attributable to fraud on the part of the percipient, or to a misconception (common enough in the hypnotic trance) of the source from which he obtained his information. In the classic case of Major Buckley’s clairvoyants<sup>1</sup> there can be very little doubt that the procedure was deliberately fraudulent. So in the case of  $X + Y = Z$ , quoted in the same volume, there are the strongest grounds for attributing the alleged clairvoyance to trickery on the part of a pathological secondary personality.<sup>2</sup>

In short, Myers’ argument is sound, and may ultimately prove fruitful. But the data are at present wholly insufficient, and hardly any fresh evidence of these hypothetical powers of the imprisoned soul has

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Myers, vol. i. 557, *seq.*, from the *Zoist*.

<sup>2</sup> See a brief account of this case below, Book II. chap. i.

been adduced since his death.<sup>1</sup> In these lofty regions, where we almost lose sight of terrestrial analogies, we have no right to use the word "impossible," perhaps not even the word "improbable." Let us admit that it is wholly a question of evidence. But, so far as the evidence at present goes, clairvoyance and precognition are mere chimeras, and telepathy may be no more than a vestigial faculty, to remind us, like the prehensile powers of the newly-born infant, of a time when man was in the making.

Myers' great synthesis, therefore, remains alike in its strength and weakness untouched since his death. Within the last nine years, in fact, psychical research has turned its energies in other directions—to the physical phenomena, chiefly of Eusapia Palladino, and to the trance revelations of Mrs. Piper and the sub-conscious writings of a band of automatists, most of whom owe their interest in the subject directly to the influence of Myers himself.

<sup>1</sup> In his recent book, Sir Oliver Lodge devotes two chapters to the evidence for clairvoyance and prevision. But only one of the examples cited is new; and most of the cases grouped under Clairvoyance are explicable by telepathy, or perhaps by even more familiar causes.



# The Newer Spiritualism

## BOOK I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE OLDER SPIRITUALISM : DANIEL DUNGLAS HOME

THE movement of modern spiritualism is by no means dying out. The last decade, in fact, has been in some respects more fruitful than any similar period in the past, and has presented us with an entirely new set of problems, of which the most confident critic can scarcely yet claim to have found the solution. The last ten years have been fruitful in two directions. On the one hand, the belief in the physical phenomena has received a powerful impetus from the feats of the Italian medium Eusapia Palladino, who has won over many scientific men to her allegiance. On the other hand, there has been an altogether new and striking development in the trance messages received through Mrs. Piper and the writings of a new group of automatists, ladies of culture, who have themselves taken a leading part in investigating the remarkable messages written by their unconscious hands.

Now, the ordinary unlearned spiritualist bases his



belief in a spirit world on these two heterogeneous groups of facts, the movement of tables and tambourines in the dark and the messages received through automatic writing or in trance. And, in fact, heterogeneous though they may seem, the unlearned spiritualist is no doubt right in refusing to dissociate the two classes of phenomenon. For they are constantly associated *in rerum natura*. This, in fact, is the justification for their treatment side by side in the present book. For the chief interest in the recent automatic writings lies for most persons in the hope which they hold out of bringing us into touch with a world beyond the grave; whilst few even of those who believe in the genuineness of Eusapia's feats are now disposed to attribute them to the agency of spirits disincarnate. But it is an historical fact that the physical and the psychical manifestations have always been closely associated together; that the peculiar physiological or psychical temperament which has predisposed its possessor to automatic utterance has also commonly predisposed him to move tables and play on musical instruments in the dark. In the attempt, therefore, to decipher the secret of these, it would seem, still unexplained automatic messages, it is essential that the student should first make himself conversant with the so-called physical phenomena of spiritualism. In the following chapters, in order to attain something of the proper perspective, the discussion of Eusapia Palladino's recent feats is prefaced by a brief summary of the most important achievements of physical mediumship in the past. For this purpose I have selected the career of Daniel Dunglas Home. No well-informed spiritualist will deny that in Home

the case is presented at its best. No medium ever performed more remarkable feats or before witnesses so distinguished and so competent. Further, Home stands alone amongst physical mediums in that he was never exposed in fraudulent practices.

Daniel Dunglas Hume, or Home, as he later preferred to spell his name, was, according to his own account, born in Edinburgh in 1833. In one of his autobiographical writings he claims descent from the tenth Earl of Home; but no proof is offered for the statement. At an early period of his life he was taken to America by an aunt, and lived with her until 1850. From that date onwards he practised as a spirit medium, at first in America, later mainly in England and on the Continent. It does not appear that he ever accepted a definite money payment for his séances. He was a man, from the testimony of all who knew him, of great personal charm. Mr. Ion Perdicaris, who knew him well in the early part of his career both in America and in this country, has described him to me as "very vain of his personal appearance, with a quite innocent and not unpleasing vanity. Always pleasing manners—very affectionate towards all—men, women, and children alike." Speaking at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research in 1894, Sir W. Crookes said: "To those who knew him Home was one of the most lovable of men, and his perfect genuineness and uprightness were beyond suspicion."<sup>1</sup>

His chief characteristics seem to have been a child-like spontaneity, gaiety, and frankness, and an overflowing warmth of affection for those around him.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 345.

These qualities, together with the exercise of his wonderful powers, secured him throughout his life the friendship and patronage of many persons of wealth and social distinction. He lived in their houses and enjoyed their hospitality ; a circle of American friends subscribed money to send him to Europe ; in this country he lived with and on his spiritualist admirers ; when funds were low he gave public recitations, and his friends took tickets, or set up a studio, and his friends gave him commissions ; he married successively two ladies with private fortunes. Mr. Perdicaris provided at one period for the education of his young son ; at another time a salaried position as secretary to a spiritualist society was founded for him by some wealthy patrons.

Home's life seems after childhood to have been almost uniquely successful in the kind of success at which he aimed. But there was one failure. Mrs. Lyon was a wealthy widow who, in default of a natural heir, professed her desire to adopt Daniel Home. As earnest of greater benefactions to follow she presented him with the sum of £40,000, besides various gifts, and Home in turn took the name of his adopted parent. A few months later Mrs. Lyon changed her intentions and desired to revoke her gifts. She obtained a verdict in her favour, and the money had to be returned. In giving judgment the Court appears to have felt that, though no definite charge of fraud or illicit influence could be proved against Home, there was in the circumstances a strong presumption that Mrs. Lyon's gifts were not "acts of pure volition uninfluenced."

In this country Home gave séances to many persons of distinction, amongst them Lord Brougham, Sir David

Brewster, Robert Owen, Sir E. Bulwer Lytton, T. A. Trollope, and Dr. Garth Wilkinson. But the chief English witnesses to his phenomena were, as will be seen, Sir William Crookes, Lord Adare (the present Earl of Dunraven), the Master of Lindsay (the present Earl of Crawford), and Mr. H. D. Jencken. Home was also a frequent visitor to the Continent ; he performed on more than one occasion before the Emperor and Empress at the Tuileries, before the Czar of Russia, and many other royal and noble personages. He first paid this country a brief visit in 1855 ; but his most remarkable manifestations were given during his more prolonged residence here from 1860 to 1872 or thereabouts.

After the latter year, having shortly before married his second wife, he retired into private life, broke with most of his old friends, and finally died in 1886.

This brief sketch of Home's life and character is necessary to a proper understanding of the phenomena produced in his presence and through his agency. During the period of his youth, when Home practised as a spirit medium in America—from 1850 to 1855—there were many other mediums producing apparently similar phenomena and with apparently almost equal success. If Home excelled them at all in public estimation, it appears to have been due more to his social qualities than to any other superiority of endowment. The Fox Girls, Gordon, Cooley, Abby Warner, E. S. Fowler, and other practitioners of that date could move tables in the dark no less persuasively ; could discourse sounds to the ear of faith not less entrancing on divers instruments of music ; could to the eye of faith display spirit hands and faces not less convincing.

It was on his second visit to this country, as already said, that his powers appear to have reached their maximum development. Mr. W. M. Wilkinson, a well-known solicitor, gives an account of a typical séance at that period :

“ . . . There were eight of us, all well known to me, and some of them known wherever the English language is spoken. We were in the drawing-room of a house in Cornwall Terrace, Regent's Park, and we sat round a large lloo-table and commenced talking. Curiously enough, one having said that Professor Faraday was coming on the following Monday to a séance, and speculating as to his guardian spirit not allowing him to be easily convinced, there were at once very loud knocks on the table in affirmation of that proposition. I was sitting next to my wife, on her right hand, and immediately afterwards I felt my left leg gently touched, in a position where it was impossible for Mr. Home to have reached it. There then began a gentle but deep vibration of the table, chairs, and floor, till all the room was shaking violently, during which the table rose about ten inches, the trembling continuing all the time. The table began to rise on the opposite side to where Mr. Home was sitting, and it was clearly out of his power to have so raised it. Mr. Home's chair was quietly moved back, away from the table, about three feet ; and, whilst there, the dresses of my wife and the lady next to her were both pulled, and so strongly that I could see them dragging down. I also felt my wife's dress whilst being so pulled, and there was a wonderful force expended in the act. At this time Mr. Home was fully six feet off, and both from the distance and from his being in full view, I could see that it was done by no force of his. Mr. Home now held the accordion in his right hand beside his chair, and it at once began to play. He held it by the bottom, the keys being on the top, and they were therefore out of his reach. It was impossible that he could touch them. I carefully examined the instrument, opening the slide beneath the keys, and I found it to be a common instrument, with only the usual mechanism of the keys. There was nothing inside it.



I looked steadily at it, and at the hand and fingers with which he held it. There it was, being pulled up and down, and discoursing sweet sounds, whilst his hand was stationary and his fingers motionless. I could see above and beneath the instrument, and there was no visible cause for its motion, nor for the opening and shutting of the keys which caused the music. When it ceased, my wife asked if it could not be played in her hand, and immediately the instrument emitted three sounds, which we took to mean that it would have much pleasure in trying. It was accordingly given to her, and, whilst she was holding it, she said she felt one of her fingers being touched. Immediately afterwards the table was raised about a foot steadily from the floor. As there was no sound from the accordion in her hands, she returned it to Mr. Home, but it was taken from his hand immediately and given back to her, and, whilst in her right hand, it began to play. She felt it distinctly lifted up and drawn forcibly down, and she did not and could not touch the keys, which, however, must necessarily be opened to make a sound. In Mr. Home's hands a beautiful tune was now played, during which we heard what has been so often described—the full notes gradually decreasing till they died away into the thinnest streaks of sound. By three quickly repeated notes it was promised that the instrument should play the tune of the other evening, representing 'The Two Lives,' the one in this life, the other in that which follows. The first, or this world's life, was represented by discords, grating painfully on the ear, and which I thought did but scant justice to a world which, though capable of improvement, still has some rich harmonies within its depths. In mercy to our ears, the first life did not last long, and was then succeeded by the second, which was made up of beautiful, soft, angel music, such as I had never heard. It played for several minutes, swelling into rich sounds, of which the sweetness was enchanting to the ear, and gradually changed into the dear tune of 'Home, sweet home.' . . .

"But now the table rises again a clear foot from the floor, and there stands, not quietly, but strongly undulating, still so that I was able to make the following note on my paper resting on the table, whilst at its full height: 'Table rose a foot. Count 10. I wrote this whilst up and undulating.' It then gently descended to the floor again. We now



changed places according to directions, and a gentleman became my right-hand neighbour, who, in a minute after, said that he saw a hand which he believed to be his son's. I did not see it, nor did I see three fingers which my wife shortly after saw ; but, in answer to a question, I had three taps on my knee as from a hand, still with no such distinctness as to make me sure what it was. At this time, several at once said they saw a light, cloudy appearance dart across the room, but, being behind me, I saw nothing of it.

“ In one corner of the room, near where we were sitting, was a shrine with several Indian idols of bronze. Suddenly there was a commotion among them, and a crash, and a large one was thrown down, and brought with some violence and noise under the table. There it appeared as if it was in the hands of some vigorous power ; and presently we heard a jingling of some metallic substance against it, which afterwards proved to be a metal ornamental canopy, which had been unscrewed from the back of the idol, and with which questions were now answered by knocking them together. In like manner, loud knocks were made in answer to questions, by rattling the idol against the floor. A remark was made as to the want of respect thus indicated, and at once a number of jubilant raps were produced by again knocking the two parts of the idol together. Two or three times the idol appeared, pushing up inside of the table-cloth, and twice it made its appearance naked above the table, and gently reached the ground again. Some flowers were brought from the shrine, and placed in the hand of each person present. Our present consisted of a rose and several pinks. I felt the rose placed in my hand under the table, all other hands being visible and on the table.

“ Several times during the evening we all perceived a cool air pervading the table, and which it was impossible not to notice. The accordion was now placed on the floor, and all hands on the table, when it was heard to sound clearly several times, but no tune was played. It then tried to get from the floor to the table, but was not able to accomplish the whole journey, and fell gently back to the floor. The table was now again raised clear from the ground, both my feet being on its pediment, and pressing

heavily downwards the whole time. The resistance and upward, steady movement of the table were strangely curious, as was its careful, quiet descent, my feet still pressing on it, and yet it reached the ground without noise. There was now a general rattle among the idols, and several loud knocks, and then came an end of a very interesting evening, during which I had seen and heard what was sufficient to convince me that those are wrong who deny the possibility of these phenomena." 1

This account is typical in all respects. This order of phenomena was almost invariably observed at a mixed séance. First came raps and knocks, then vibrations of the table and room, levitation of the table, touches on the hands and dress of the sitters under the table, self-playing of the accordion—even the tunes showed little variation. After the simpler phenomena would follow, if the circumstances were favourable, visible hands and arms, luminous appearances, variously described as clouds, or hands, or even heads, movements of various articles of furniture from distant parts of the room up to the table in the vicinity of the medium, a general distribution of flowers. Sometimes, when the sitters were tried and trustworthy, still more remarkable phenomena occurred. The polished table would be inclined at an angle of 45° or more, and all the articles on it—candlesticks, paper, pencil—would retain their place ; or the person of the medium would be elongated ; or he would be carried bodily through the air above the heads of the sitters, occasionally touching them as he passed ; or, finally, he would plunge his hands into the fire, and walk about the room carrying a piece of flaming coal.

We will consider the more striking phenomena later.

1 *Spiritual Magazine*, 1861, pp. 359—62.

For the present let us again turn to Mr. Wilkinson's account. It is typical also of the mental attitude of the sitters. It will be observed that Mr. Wilkinson does not give the date and place of the sitting, or the names of his fellow-witnesses, nor does he give any details as to the general arrangements. He does not tell us the relative position of the sitters ; he does not say whether hands were held round the circle ; he rarely mentions where the medium's hands and feet were ; he does not give the distance of the medium's chair from the objects moved. Above all, he does not say how the room was lighted.

From the accounts of séances by other observers we can gather, piecemeal, what were the usual arrangements. Home selected—though careful to conceal the selection—the sitters who sat next to him. His hands and feet were not, as a rule, held or controlled in any way. Nor, as a rule, do the sitters seem to have joined hands round the table. The light during the first part of the sitting, when the phenomena took place beneath the table, was, as a rule, fairly good—gaslight or several candles. Before the appearance of hands, the movement of distant objects, and the higher phenomena generally, the lights were generally extinguished ; the room would then be lighted by fire-light only, and very frequently the fire would be screened, or damped down, and the shutters opened.

That there was little light in the room during the latter part of the séance under consideration may be inferred from the fact that a light, cloudy appearance was seen to move across the room. The light was probably turned out when the change of seats was made. It would seem, further, that no precau-

tions were taken against trickery. This omission arose directly from the mental attitude of the sitters. Mr. Wilkinson, in this respect also typical, prefaces his account with the following remarks :

“ I had several times seen, both in London and Paris, direct writing by invisible power, on paper placed beyond mortal contact, and I was well convinced also of the alleged power of mediums to float in the air, by having had one come down on my chest, as well as having on other occasions had hold of his hand, whilst he floated about the room. I did not therefore, on this evening, care to disturb myself and others by taking those precautions which would have been necessary if I were the President of the Royal Society, and were about to make a conclusive report to that illustrious body of inquirers into physics. I did not doubt, but I sat, and saw, and heard, and felt, and made notes.”

And in the middle of the séance, after the playing of “ Home, sweet home,” he breaks off his account to comment :

“ What more appropriate and happy view of the second life could be given in musical sounds than this of its being home ; and what a sweet sermon on the relative value of the two lives ! I believe it was received more solemnly, and yet more thankfully, by all who were present, from our knowing of the sickness ‘ even unto death ’ of one of the party, the youngest and the happiest in her bright longings for this second life. It would be almost blasphemy to ask in her presence what is the good of spiritualism. Such a question would not occur to a good man, and could not be asked by a wise one. The mere man of science, who measures human souls by mathematics, would be out of place in such a scene, and had I not been too happily engaged with my own thoughts, I should have felt glad that we were troubled with none such.”

This attitude towards the subject is to us of the present generation hardly conceivable. But it was the

general attitude of the inquirers in the decade 1860-1870. A great wave of exalted emotion, partly religious, partly arising from the personal affections, swept through the séance-room; the gospel of spiritualism carried men away from their footing on the solid earth. The whole psychological environment was such as we now associate with a revival meeting. This result was due primarily, not to the puerile feats which we have just considered, but to the messages of love and consolation purporting to come from the dead. Fifty years ago little was known of subconscious mental action, and all such messages coming through automatic writing, or from the lips of entranced mediums, were apt to be taken at their face value, as genuine voices from a world beyond the grave. Often, very often, there was no trickery at all in the matter. The seeker became the prey of his own fond imaginings, the dupe of the self below the threshold. The impressions thus produced in private were strengthened tenfold by the outpourings of the séance-room. Cunningly phrased spirit messages were part of the stock-in-trade of all the tribe. But Home out-topped them all to such an extent that we are often compelled to wonder whether he really could, on occasion, read the minds of his sitters, as Mrs. Piper appears to do now. Of course Home, moving in his ordinary life as an intimate friend of the persons to whom he gave his séances, had exceptional opportunities of acquiring useful information. But the knowledge which his trance messages appear occasionally to show of the private affairs of his sitters is certainly very remarkable. Unfortunately, the problem cannot now be solved—we have not the whole data before us.



But Home in particular enhanced the effect of these intimate personal messages by the display of what passed for, and perhaps was—for who can read the riddle of another's mind?—genuine religious feeling. Amongst intimate friends the physical marvels of his séances were constantly interspersed with sermons.

He published in the *Spiritual Magazine* an account of a beautiful vision of heaven and purple-tinted clouds which had been vouchsafed to him. The late Lord Dunraven was profoundly impressed by Home's reverential attitude to the name of Christ, and describes some of Home's trance utterances as very touching and beautiful. Home's "control" frequently gave, through his mouth, spiritual counsel and exhortations to his young friends. The names of God, the angels, heaven were continually on his lips when sitting in the darkened séance-room. Here is an extract from a letter written in 1855 by Home himself to the *Hartford Times* (U.S.A.), in which he describes the effect produced by a séance on Mr. T. A. Trollope :

"When at length the light did beam upon his soul, and the chords of his spirit vibrated in unison with the celestial harmonies that ushered in the birth of faith through the shadows of his old unbelief, the result was too much for his stoicism, and the tears of holy joy coursed down his manly cheeks. It was an impressive scene, and an occasion of deep interest. There are many such in the life of a spirit medium."

The reader will perhaps think that the thing here is a little overdone. But the letter was written at the outset of the medium's career, for the benefit of a comparatively uncultured audience. His later utterances reflected the polish of the social circles in which he moved.



Set down in cold print the business must seem inconceivably nauseous. And to some contemporaries, as to Robert Browning, for instance, it so appeared at the time. But Browning was a rare exception, or Home's enemies were mostly inarticulate. And if Home were merely playing a part, he played it as no man ever played before. Alexander of Abonoteichos was not worthy to black his boots; Cagliostro, the Count St. Germain, and Madame Blavatsky seem but 'prentice hands. He was an artist, in the common phrase, to the tips of those delicate, all too capable fingers. Passionately fond of music, and a passable performer, an admirable reciter of poetry—he earned his living, as already said, for some time by giving public readings—a sculptor—at least, he set up a studio, and his friends bought his busts—and a charming social companion, Home won and retained the personal affection and esteem of all those with whom he came into intimate relations, from Lord Adare and Sir William Crookes to Mr. Cox, of Cox's Hotel, in Jermyn Street.

Under the circumstances it is not to be wondered at that Home was never convicted of trickery. He could, of course, in his capacity as distinguished guest, not only select his sitters, but appoint their place at the table, and the ladies who were usually chosen to sit on either side of him would as soon have suspected their own husbands or sons. In any case, there was at this time little risk of public exposure. The time of dirty muslin, spirit lamps, and false beards had not yet come. The practitioners of the period used little apparatus, preferring to rely for their effects on their own deftness of hand and foot, helped by the imagina-

tion of their clients. Home was certainly no exception to this rule. With two possible exceptions, to be discussed later, it would seem that he used no adventitious aids in any of his feats.

Robert Browning was convinced that Home was an impostor, and gave characteristic expression to his conviction. But there is no direct evidence that he ever proved that Home cheated, though he formed a decided opinion, after witnessing a single performance, "that the whole display of hands, spirit utterances, &c., was a cheat and imposture."<sup>1</sup>

The only direct evidence of imposture which I have come across is in a letter from Mr. Merrifield, who wrote in August, 1855, an account, from which the following extract is taken, of a sitting held with Home the previous month. New moon occurred on July 14, 1855, and, as the moon had already set, the date of the sitting would probably be not later than the 18th, a time when the last faint traces of daylight would still be lingering in the sky even at eleven p.m. There had been a sitting earlier in the evening, at which the usual phenomena—movements of table, playing of accordion, and plucking of dresses—had occurred :

" . . . Just as we were on the point of taking our leave, the medium professed his willingness to give us another sitting. Accordingly, we took our places at the side of the table, the medium occupying the extreme right, and a constant associate of his sitting opposite to him. I sat nearly half-way between them, and therefore facing the windows. The table was circular, and the semicircle nearest the window was unoccupied. The lights were removed, and very soon the operations began. It was about eleven

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<sup>1</sup> See letter from Robert Browning, published in the *Times* of November 28, 1902.

o'clock ; the moon had set, but the night was starlight, and we could well see the outline of the windows and distinguish, though not with accuracy of outline, the form of any large object intervening before them. The medium sat as low as possible in his low seat. His hands and arms were under the table. He talked freely, encouraging conversation, and seeming uneasy when it flagged. After a few preliminary raps somebody exclaimed that the 'spirit hand' had appeared, and the next moment an object, resembling a child's hand with a long, wide sleeve attached to it, appeared before the light. This occurred several times. The object appeared mainly at one or other of two separate distances from the medium. One of these distances was just that of his foot, the other that of his outstretched hand ; and when the object receded or approached, I noticed that the medium's body or shoulder sank or rose in his chair accordingly. This was pretty conclusive to myself and the friend who accompanied me ; but afterwards, upon the invitation of one of the dupes present, the 'spirit hand' rose so high that we saw the whole connection between the medium's shoulder and arm, and the 'spirit hand' dressed out on the end of his own."<sup>1</sup>

No doubt Mr. Merrifield saw what really took place. But his account in itself carries no more weight than that of the rest of the spectators, who "saw" spirit hands. It is valuable, however, as showing that Home did not succeed in hoodwinking all his sitters.

But Home's manifestations did not altogether escape the challenge of science. More than fifteen years after the séance last recorded Sir W. Crookes undertook a prolonged investigation of the subject of spiritualism. Notes of some séances with Home were published in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* in 1889.<sup>2</sup> The circle, which met round a table, was formed of Sir W. Crookes and his

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, May, 1903, pp. 77, 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.* vol. vi. pp. 98—127.

personal friends. With the exception of two partial levitations of the medium, and the fire-test, to which reference will be made later, the phenomena observed were the ordinary feats—levitation of the table, self-playing of accordion, luminous hands, &c.—and the conditions, except for the higher qualifications of the observers, were similar to those already described. It is difficult to feel sure that trickery if practised would have been detected, especially as Sir W. Crookes himself was never permitted to sit next to the medium, and as his attention was further distracted by having to take notes. A few movements of objects are, however, recorded which are difficult to explain, unless we suppose that a thread was employed.

Thus, on June 21, 1871, the light being apparently sufficient, but not more than sufficient, to admit of the indicator of the spring balance being read, a message was spelled out by the table :

“ Hands off the table, and all joined.” We therefore sat as directed.

“ Just in front of Mr. Home, and on the table, was a thin wooden lath  $23\frac{1}{4}$  inches long,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide, and  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch thick, covered with white paper. It was plainly visible to us all, and was one foot from the edge of the table. Presently the end of the lath, pointing towards Mr. Walter Crookes, rose up in the air to the height of about ten inches. The other end then rose up to a height of about five inches, and the lath then floated about for more than a minute in this position suspended in the air, with no visible means of support. It moved sideways and waved gently up and down, just like a piece of wood on the top of small waves of the sea. The lower end then gently sank till it touched the table, and the other end followed.

“ Whilst we were speaking about this wonderful exhibition of force, the lath began to move again, and, rising up as it did at first, it waved about in a somewhat similar manner.

The startling novelty of the movement having now worn off, we were all enabled to follow its motions with more accuracy. Mr. Home was sitting away from the table, at least three feet from the lath, all this time; he was apparently quite motionless, and his hands were tightly grasped, his right by Mrs. Walter Crookes and his left by Mrs. William Crookes. Any movement by his feet was impossible, as, owing to the large cage being under the table, his legs were not able to be put beneath, but were visible to those on each side of him. All the others had hold of hands."

The sitters had changed their seats immediately before this performance, which would have given Home the opportunity for attaching a thread; the dim light and the injunction to join hands removed any risk of detection during the performance; and the immediate breaking up of the séance at the conclusion of the movement would have afforded Home the opportunity to remove the thread.

But Sir W. Crookes was not contented with mere observation under conditions which were so clearly favourable to fraud. In July, 1871, he published in the *Quarterly Journal of Science* an account<sup>1</sup> of an investigation carried out under more rigorous conditions at his own house, with Sir William Huggins, Serjeant Cox, Mr. Walter Crookes, and Mr. Williams, chemical assistant, as the witnesses.

Sir William Crookes had prepared for the occasion a cylinder, about two feet in diameter, constructed of upright laths fastened at either end to a wooden hoop, and crossed by horizontal strands of insulated copper wire. The wire was then tied together by vertical lines of string, knotted at the points of junction, the

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards reprinted with other articles, under the title "Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism," 1874.



whole forming a network with meshes about two inches by one. The cylinder, which was one foot ten inches high, would just fit under the dining-table, but would not allow of the insertion of a hand. A new accordion had been purchased for the occasion. Home sat at the table, with his feet on either side of the wire cylinder, which was placed under the table. Sir W. Crookes sat on his left hand, and another observer on his right, each with a foot on one of Home's feet. One of Home's hands was placed on the table, in full view, with the other he grasped the accordion by the bottom, leaving the keyed end to hang downwards. The cage was partly withdrawn from under the table, to permit of the insertion of Home's hand, still holding the accordion; the cage was then pushed under the table as far as Home's arm would permit it to go. Under these conditions the accordion was seen to move, and then played at first a few notes, and afterwards a simple air. The assistant, who went under the table for the purpose, reported that under these conditions he could see the instrument expanding and contracting. Home then removed his hand altogether from the accordion, and left it suspended, with no apparent attachment, in the cage under the table, no person being near it, and Home's hand being held by the person next to him. The instrument under these conditions continued to play, and Sir William and two others saw it "floating about" inside the cage with no visible support. Home then again grasped the accordion, and while it was playing in his hand Sir William grasped Home's arm below the elbow, and felt no movement of muscles.

It seems clear that, even if the observers had relaxed



their control, the cylindrical wire cage must have effectually prevented the co-operation of Home's feet, or his free hand, in this experiment; and at first reading the thing may well seem inexplicable by fraud. But [(1) though the room is said to have been lighted by gas the degree of illumination is not stated, nor the position of the table and the investigators, and of Home himself, with reference to the source of light ; (2) the accordion was seen to be expanding and contracting when Home's hand held it. It is reported only as floating about (? swaying) when Home's hand was altogether removed ; and the accordion, as will be seen, played only in the partial obscurity afforded by the table. I know, indeed, of no instance in which it is recorded as playing in a good light. All that is described here is consistent with the supposition that the accordion never played at all, but that the sounds heard proceeded from an automatic instrument concealed about Home's person, actuated by pressure. There is evidence that Madame Blavatsky used an instrument of this kind to produce her "astral bells." I am not aware of any good evidence that the keys were ever seen to move ; and any conjurer in a light of his own choosing could make the instrument contract and expand, whilst he held it, by a loop of strong thread. If Home contrived—as we see that he did contrive—to put his hand again on the accordion before it was removed from the cage, there would be no risk that the attachment which he had presumably fixed underneath the table to support the accordion would be detected. The risk was extremely small in any case. Home, an honoured guest, displaying his marvellous powers for the satisfaction of some personal

friends, was easily master of the situation. It is argued that there could have been "no machinery, apparatus, or contrivance of any sort" secreted about Home's person, because, Sir W. Crookes having called at Home's apartments to fetch him for the experiments, the medium actually changed his dress in Sir William's presence. But what was there to prevent Home's slipping into the pocket of his overcoat a small musical box, a loop of black silk, and a hook with a sharp end? No further "apparatus" would be required.

Another experiment made on the same occasion and before the same observers presents us at first sight with a more difficult problem. The apparatus employed is thus described :

"In another part of the room an apparatus was fitted up for experimenting on the alteration in the weight of a body. It consisted of a mahogany board 36 inches long by  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide and 1 inch thick. At each end a strip of mahogany  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide was screwed on, forming feet. One end of the board rested on a firm table, whilst the other end was supported by a spring balance hanging from a substantial tripod stand. The balance was fitted with a self-registering index, in such a manner that it would record the maximum weight indicated by the pointer. The apparatus was adjusted so that the mahogany board was horizontal, its foot resting flat on the support. In this position its weight was 3 lbs., as marked by the pointer of the balance.

"Before Mr. Home entered the room the apparatus had been arranged in position, and he had not even the object of some parts explained before sitting down." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> But if this particular piece of apparatus was new to Mr. Home, the general plan of the experiments was not, for Sir William tells us, in another part of his article (p. 17), that he had "for some time past been making similar experiments" with Home.

When, after the experiments with an accordion, attention was turned to the apparatus, Mr. Home placed his fingers lightly upon the extreme end of the mahogany board farthest from the balance, Dr. Huggins and Sir W. Crookes sitting one on each side and watching; under these conditions the index of the balance moved several times, the greatest downward pull registered being 6 lbs. It was particularly noticed, Sir W. Crookes tells us, that Home's fingers were not at any time advanced more than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the extreme end of the board—that is, not outside the point of support—so that it was physically impossible for any pressure of his fingers to have produced the downward movements of the board shown by the index. Moreover, “his feet as well as his hands were closely guarded by all in the room.”

Sir William Crookes then stood on one foot on the end of the board where Home's fingers had rested, and the whole weight of his body (140 lbs.) so applied only depressed the index  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 lbs. when he jerked it up and down. It would seem, then, that Home's fingers exerted thrice the force of the whole of Sir William's body, and that without perceptible effort on his part.

The publication of these results provoked prolonged and acrimonious discussion in the scientific world, the echoes of which have hardly yet died down. But none of the scientific critics pointed to the real weakness of the evidence. The weakness consists in this: that Home, a practised conjurer, as the past record of himself and his fellows entitles us to assume, *dictated the conditions of the experiment*. He did this, not in any crude or obvious way, but simply by declining to allow the capricious force of which he was

master to operate until the conditions were to his liking, or, in Sir William's own words :

“ the experiments I have tried have been very numerous, but owing to our imperfect knowledge of the conditions which favour or oppose the manifestations of this force, to the apparently capricious manner in which it is exerted, and to the fact that Mr. Home himself is subject to unaccountable ebbs and flows of the force, it has but seldom happened that a result obtained on one occasion could be subsequently confirmed and tested with apparatus specially contrived for the purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

Put shortly, this means that Home, by the simple device of doing nothing when the conditions were unfavourable, could ensure that the light (gas—the degree of illumination not stated) was such and so placed, the apparatus so contrived, and the sitters so disposed as to suit his purpose ; further, that in the actual experiment the attention of the sitters—all of whom, as we are expressly told, guarded his feet and hands—should be concentrated on the wrong points. That, of course, is part of the conjurer's art, and Home had this inestimable advantage over the ordinary conjurer, that he could fail as often as he chose without discredit.

No doubt Home arranged that the light should be lowered, and that the apparatus should be in shadow. In some further experiments with the same apparatus made a few weeks later, the circle being at Sir William Crookes' house, we are told that at the first trial the light was by Home's order lowered to such a point “ that there was scarcely light enough to see the board and index move.”<sup>2</sup> The movement was

<sup>1</sup> “ *Researches in Spiritualism*,” p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 110. It was a little later in the same séance, after the light had been increased, that the movements of the lath occurred.

probably effected by means of a loop of black silk, which would be invisible in the obscurity, passed over the distal end of the board and attached at the other end to some part of Home's person. The curious movements of the lath already referred to, and the seldom attested, and therefore probably risky, phenomenon of the inclined table with its self-supporting candlesticks, were possibly worked by similar means. A thread or hair, as we shall see later, is known to be used by other mediums, and its use involves little risk of detection if the attention of the witnesses, as would certainly have been the case in the balance experiment, can be diverted from the point of attachment.

It seems possible, then, to explain the great bulk of the marvels recorded of Home by a combination of trickery on the one side and unconscious misinterpretation on the other. But it is not easy to understand how the investigators of a generation ago could have been deceived, and repeatedly deceived, by devices so crude as those here suggested ; and if we find ourselves unable to accept their testimony, we are guided to an adverse decision, not so much perhaps by the defects which have been demonstrated in the particular evidence here presented as by our realisation of the psychological environment in which these feats were performed, and by the general presumption against the operation of the supposed new physical energy which inevitably follows from an analysis of the cognate evidence accumulated down to the present day. Even so, there remain a few manifestations witnessed in Home's presence which the hypothesis of simple trickery does not seem to fit. The chief of these marvels—levitation, elongation, and the fire ordeal—will be dealt with in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER II

### LEVITATION AND THE FIRE ORDEAL

THE feats described in the last chapter, with a single exception, were part of the ordinary repertory of the spirit medium then and later. Home was perhaps more successful in rapping, moving tables, exhibiting spirit hands, and distributing flowers than Mrs. Marshall or any of his American colleagues who thronged to our hospitable island at this time, but only as one conjurer is more successful than another. These feats required no apparatus and involved, in the peculiar psychological environment, little risk of miscarriage or exposure. The one manifestation which appears to have been peculiar to Home has been described above at some length, and the explanation suggested. Other mediums performed, in the dark, on musical instruments of many kinds. Home appears to have been the only practitioner of the period who could play—or could produce the impression of playing—an accordion held by one hand with the keys downward, and that with the room sufficiently lighted for the outlines of the instrument and the supporting hand to be seen.

But the phenomena now to be considered stand on a different footing. Home, indeed, was not the only medium of the period to be levitated, and other instances of elongation and the fire-test are on record.



But if we may judge by the accounts that have come down to us, Home certainly carried these feats to a greater pitch of perfection than his rivals, and exhibited them with greater frequency and with a happier audacity. In none of these performances, again, does the explanation lie so near the surface as in the petty chicanery already described. We cannot attempt to explain the records of levitation and the fire-test without taking into account the psychological conditions ; and let us suppose the spectators to be as suggestible as we will, a few of the incidents reported still remain unexplained—though logic, it need hardly be said, does not require us therefore to conclude them inexplicable.

Home's levitations were of two kinds, the partial and the complete. Of the partial levitations, in which he was seen elevated at most a foot or two above the ground, we have but few records. It was a less effective manifestation, and would be more likely on that account to escape record. Here is one description quoted from an account dated January, 1861, by Mr. John Jones, whose name is familiar in the literature of the period as one of the most recklessly credulous believers. The incident took place in a drawing-room, lighted originally by a good fire and three gas-burners. After the ordinary display of minor phenomena, the account proceeds :

“ Two of the three gas lights were now put out, and the fire, burning brightly, gave a subdued light in the room. Mr. Home then became cataleptic in his hands and arms ; he was raised from his seat till he stood upright, and then he rose vertically till he was a foot above the floor, his head level with the chandelier ; this was repeated twice, but he did not rise higher.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Spiritual Magazine*, 1861, p. 69.

Home rarely permitted so much light during a performance of this kind ; but no doubt he knew with whom he had to deal. It will be observed that Mr. Jones gives no details as to Home's position or his own.

Sir William Crookes, in a speech delivered at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research in 1894,<sup>1</sup> thus describes some of the levitations of Home which he had witnessed :

“ On another occasion I was invited to come to him, when he rose eighteen inches off the ground, and I passed my hands under his feet, round him, and over his head when he was in the air.

“ On several occasions Home and the chair on which he was sitting at the table rose off the ground. It was generally done very deliberately, and Home sometimes tucked up his feet on the chair, and held up his hands in view of all of us. On such an occasion I have got down and seen and felt that all four legs were off the ground at the same time, Home's feet being on the chair.”

Sir William on this occasion was apparently speaking from memory. His published notes of séances with Home<sup>2</sup> include no case in which he had the opportunity of observing the phenomenon of levitation under such favourable conditions. He records only two instances at which he was present :

On July 30, 1871, shortly after the gas had been turned out and spirit lamps [*i.e.*, lamps burning spirit] substituted :

“ Mr. Home walked to the open space in the room between Mr. I.'s chair and the sideboard, and stood there quite upright and quiet. He then said, ‘ I'm rising, I'm rising,’

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, November, 1894, p. 342.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi.

when we all saw him rise from the ground slowly to a height of about six inches, remain there for about ten seconds, and then slowly descend. From my position I could not see his feet, but I distinctly saw his head, projected against the opposite wall, rise up, and Mr. Walter Crookes, who was sitting near where Mr. Home was, said that his feet were in the air. There was no stool or other thing near which could have aided him. Moreover, the movement was a continuous glide upwards."

On April 21, 1872, after some playing of the accordion,

a message was given :

"Try less light."

The handkerchief moved about along the floor, visible to all.

Mr. Home nearly disappeared under the table in a curious attitude ; then he was (still in his chair) wheeled out from under the table still in the same attitude, his feet out in front off the ground. He was then sitting almost horizontally, his shoulders resting on his chair.

He asked Mrs. Wr. Crookes to remove the chair from under him, as it was not supporting him. He was then seen to be sitting in the air, supported by nothing visible.

Then Mr. Home rested the extreme top of his head on a chair, and his feet on the sofa. He said he felt supported in the middle very comfortably. The chair then moved away of its own accord, and Mr. Home rested flat over the floor behind Mrs. Wr. Crookes.

On the first occasion the performance took place on the opposite side of the room from where Sir William Crookes was sitting, and he was separated from the medium by the whole length of the dining-room. On the second occasion the circle sat at a round table, Mrs. D. between Sir William and the medium. Mrs. Walter Crookes, behind whom the levitation took place, was seated on the farther side. On each occasion the light had been lowered shortly before

the performance. Sir William Crookes, it will be remembered, doubled the part of observer and note-taker. Under these conditions the feat can hardly be considered an impressive one.

Of the complete levitation of the medium we have numerous accounts. The phenomenon is, in fact, one of the most fully attested of all spiritualist marvels. As already said, it was not peculiar to Home. So early as 1851—three years after the outbreak of the Rochester rappings—we hear of an American medium called Gordon being taken up in the air by spirit hands. From Mr. Isaac Rehn, President of the Harmonial Society of Philadelphia, we have an account, written in 1855, of a similar performance, with the same medium. The incident is said to have taken place “some two years since.”

“About the same time a company of persons, whose names, as far as I can recollect, I shall mention, were seated around two tables, joined together, in order to furnish room sufficient to seat the party. The house in which I then lived had two parlours, with folding doors. The two tables referred to occupied the entire length of the front parlour, leaving barely room enough for the chairs at the front end of the room; the other end of the table extended quite to the folding doors, leaving, of course, no passage on either end. It so happened that I was seated at the end of the table projecting into the doorway. The medium, Mr. Gordon, was seated about midway of the tables, on the left, the other seats being occupied by the rest of the company.

“After a variety of manifestations had occurred, the medium was raised from his seat by an invisible power, and, after some apparent resistance on his part, was carried through the doorway between the parlours, directly over my head, and his head being bumped along the ceiling, he passed to the farther end of the back room, in which there was no one beside himself.

“Although all the individuals present had not equally good opportunity of ascertaining the facts in this case, the room having been somewhat darkened, still, his transit over the end of the table at which I was seated, and the utter impossibility of the medium passing out in other way than over our heads, his continued conversation while thus suspended, and his position, as indicated by the sound, with other facts in the case, leave no reasonable doubt of the performance of the feat.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Rehn’s admission that the room was “somewhat darkened” is probably a severe under-statement of the case; for it will be noted that he does not venture to appeal to the sense of sight for verification of the miracle.

About the same time D. D. Hume (as he then preferred to spell his name) was the protagonist of a similar performance.

“Suddenly, and without any expectation on the part of the company, the medium, Mr. Hume, was taken up in the air. I had hold of his hand at the time, and I felt of his feet—they were lifted a foot from the floor. He palpitated from head to foot with the contending emotions of joy and fear, which choked his utterance. Again and again he was taken from the floor, and the third time he was carried to the ceiling of the apartment, with which his hands and feet came in gentle contact. I felt the distance from the soles of his boots to the floor, and it was nearly three feet. Others touched his feet to satisfy themselves.”

The writer of this account does not think it necessary to mention a fact, which we learn from a fuller record of the same séance given elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> that some time previously to the supreme manifestation the com-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Hare, “The Spirit Manifestations,” pp. 291, 292.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Spicer’s “Sights and Sounds,” pp. 129 and 268.



pany had adjourned to a darkened room, ostensibly that they might see the "spiritual flashes of light said to have been vouchsafed to other investigators." They saw apparently nothing, but they heard plenty of raps, and some of them felt Mr. Hume's boots.

One of the earliest descriptions of the feat in this country is to be found in an anonymous, but carefully written, account which appeared in the *Spiritual Magazine* for June, 1860. The writer records that towards the end of the séance the lights, by direction of the raps, were put out. It was then found that the light issuing from the unshuttered window was sufficient to enable those present "to faintly see each other." After this the window blinds were partly pulled down by an invisible hand, so as still further to deepen the obscurity. The usual distribution of flowers then took place.

" . . . After a pause, Mr. Home said he felt as if he were about to be lifted up ; he moved from the table, and shortly he said, ' I am rising '—but we could not see him—' they have put me on my back.' I asked, ' Will you kindly bring him, as much as possible, towards the window, so that we may see him? ' And at once he was floated, with his feet horizontally into the light of the window, so that we all saw his feet and a part of his legs resting or floating on the air like a feather, about six feet from the ground, and three feet above the height of the table. He was then floated into the dark, and he exclaimed, ' They have turned me round, and I am coming towards you ! ' I then saw his head and face, the same height as before, and as if floating on air instead of water. He then floated back, and came down and walked up to and sat on the edge of the table we were at, when the table began to rise with him on it. He asked a lady to sit on the table, and perhaps the spirits would take them both up ; the table moved a little and then was still."



The writer then, at Mr. Home's request, sat down beside him on the ottoman.

“ . . . He took my hands, and in about a minute, and without any muscular action, he gently floated away from me and was lost in the darkness. He kept talking to let us know where he was. We heard his voice in various parts of the farther end of the room, as if near the ceiling. He then cried out, ‘Oh, they have brought me a cushion to sit upon—I am sitting on it—they are taking it away.’ Just then the tassel of the cushion of another ottoman in the room struck me on my hair and forehead as if coming from the ceiling, and the cushion was deposited at my feet on the floor, falling as if a snowflake. I then saw the shadow of his body on the mirror as he floated along near the ceiling. He said, ‘I wish I had a pencil to make a mark on the ceiling. I have made a cross with my nail.’ He came down near the door, and after a pause he was again taken up; but I did not see him, but heard his voice, as if near the ceiling. Again he came down, and shortly returned to the table we were at; and the sounds on the table bade us ‘Good night.’ ”

A more highly decorated description of the same feat on another occasion is contained in an article which appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* for August, 1860, the writer being Robert Bell, the well-known dramatist and critic. All the lights on this occasion had been extinguished by the direction of the spirits, and the room was illuminated only by occasional flickers of a dying fire and by the faint grey light which came through the unshuttered window. At this stage, the writer says,

“ we could see, but scarcely distinguish, our hands upon the table. A festoon of dull, gleaming forms round the circle represented what we knew to be our hands. An occasional ray from the window now and then revealed the hazy surface of the white sheets [*sc.* of paper] and the misty bulk of the accordion.”

But even this gloom was not sufficiently profound for the spiritual requirements, and presently the window blind was drawn down by an invisible hand, "and the room was thrown into deeper darkness than before." Then the manifestations began. Hands were felt, and a bell was rung.

"Mr. Home was seated next the window. Through the semi-darkness his head was dimly visible against the curtains, and his hands might be seen in a faint white heap before him. Presently he said, in a quiet voice, 'My chair is moving—I am off the ground—don't notice me—talk of something else,' or words to that effect. It was very difficult to restrain the curiosity, not unmixed with a more serious feeling, which these few words awakened; but we talked, incoherently enough, upon some indifferent topic. I was sitting nearly opposite Mr. Home, and I saw his hands disappear from the table, and his head vanish into the deep shadow beyond. In a moment or two more he spoke again. This time his voice was in the air above our heads. He had risen from his chair to a height of four or five feet from the ground. As he ascended higher he described his position, which at first was perpendicular, and afterwards became horizontal. He said he felt as if he had been turned in the gentlest manner, as a child is turned in the arms of a nurse. In a moment or two more, he told us that he was going to pass across the window, against the grey, silvery light of which he would be visible. We watched in profound stillness, and saw his figure pass from one side of the window to the other, feet foremost, lying horizontally in the air. He spoke to us as he passed, and told us that he would turn the reverse way, and recross the window, which he did. His own tranquil confidence in the safety of what seemed from below a situation of the most novel peril gave confidence to everybody else; but, with the strongest nerves, it was impossible not to be conscious of a certain sensation of fear and awe. He hovered round the circle for several minutes, and passed, this time perpendicularly, over our heads. I heard his voice behind me in the air, and felt something lightly brush my chair. It was his foot, which he gave me leave to touch. Turning to the spot

where it was on the top of the chair, I placed my hand gently upon it, when he uttered a cry of pain, and the foot was withdrawn quickly, with a palpable shudder. It was evidently not resting on the chair, but floating; and it sprang from the touch as a bird would. He now passed over to the farthest extremity of the room, and we could judge by his voice of the altitude and distance he had attained. He had reached the ceiling, upon which he made a slight mark, and soon afterwards descended and resumed his place at the table. An incident which occurred during this aerial passage, and imparted a strange solemnity to it, was that the accordion, which we supposed to be on the ground under the window close to us, played a strain of wild pathos in the air from the most distant corner of the room."

W. M. Wilkinson, as we have seen in the last chapter, was convinced of the "alleged power of mediums to float in the air" on the ground that one had come down on his chest, and that he had held the hand of another.

In neither of these last quoted cases, again, it will be noted, is there any serious appeal to the sense of sight. The most that could be seen, in the carefully regulated gloom, is a dim silhouette representing Home's person, or part of his person, outlined against the grey square of the window. But it probably was not a square. The second account mentions the curtains. But neither writer thinks it worth while to tell us how far the curtains shrouded the window. We are by no means called upon from these incomplete accounts to assume that the whole of Home's person was seen at once floating horizontally in the air. From the first account, indeed, it seems quite clear that this was not the case, and Robert Bell's phrase, "we saw his figure pass," probably represents more of inference than of observation. We can solve

the problem without supposing, as one contemporary newspaper critic suggested, that Home brought a balloon with him into the séance-room.

But the most famous levitation is that which occurred in December, 1868, at 5, Buckingham Gate, in the presence of the Master of Lindsay (the present Lord Crawford), Lord Adare (the present Earl of Dunraven), and Captain Wynne. It was not the first feat of the kind which the two former gentlemen had witnessed. In his evidence before the Dialectical Society on July 6, 1869, Lord Lindsay thus describes a prior incident of this kind :

“ Home on one occasion was sitting next me ; in a few minutes he said, ‘ Keep quiet ; I am going up.’ His foot then came and touched my shoulder ; I then felt something like velvet touch my cheek, and on looking up was surprised to find that he had carried with him an arm-chair, which he held out in his hand, and then floated round the room, pushing the pictures out of their place as he passed round the walls. They were far beyond the reach of a person standing on the ground. The light was sufficient to enable me to see clearly.”<sup>1</sup>

If, however, we turn to the contemporary account of what is apparently the same séance, given in Lord Adare’s “ Experiences in Spiritualism,” we find that the room was “ nearly dark.” No artificial light is mentioned ; the date of the séance is not given ; it appears to have taken place some time in November or December, but there is no mention of a fire. The window blind was drawn down. At an earlier stage of the proceedings Home had also drawn the curtains across the window ; and there is no mention

<sup>1</sup> “ Report on Spiritualism of the Committee of the Dialectical Society,” p. 214.

of their being drawn back again. Lord Adare's contemporary account of the incident at no point speaks of seeing Home ; in fact, from the stress laid upon contact with Home's feet, &c., it would seem manifest that he, at any rate, could not see clearly.

Rather than believe the miracle I prefer to believe that Lord Lindsay was mistaken, and that in describing the incident half a year later he based on the sense of sight a conviction which at the time he had based wholly on the senses of hearing and touch. It is hardly necessary to point out that this is a not uncommon form of memory illusion.

The more famous incident took place in December of the same year, 1868, a week or two later than the case just recorded. Mrs. Home<sup>1</sup> gives the date as the 16th of the month. But this date appears to be founded on a misreading of Lord Adare's account (the only account known to the present writer in which any date is given). His record is headed "Séance at 5, Buckingham Gate, Wednesday, December 16th." But the report of the séance commences "On Sunday last," *i e.*, December 13th. The exact date is a matter of some interest, for a reason which will appear later.<sup>2</sup> The fullest account is that of the Master of Lindsay. In his evidence before the Dialectical Society he is reported as saying :

"I saw the levitations in Victoria Street when Home floated out of the window. He first went into a trance, and walked about uneasily ; he then went into the hall. While he was away I heard a voice whisper in my ear, 'He will go out of one window and in at another.' I was alarmed

<sup>1</sup> "Life of D. D. Home," p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> See Miss Johnson's remarks on this point, *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. p. 492.



and shocked at the idea of so dangerous an experiment. I told the company what I had heard, and we then waited for Home's return. Shortly after he entered the room. I heard the window go up, but I could not see it, for I sat with my back to it. I, however, saw his shadow on the opposite wall; he went out of the window in a horizontal position, and I saw him outside the other window (that in the next room) floating in the air. It was eighty-five feet from the ground." †

In a letter written two years later he writes :

"I was sitting with Mr. Home and Lord Adare, and a cousin of his. During the sitting Mr. Home went into a trance, and in that state was carried out of the window in the room next to where we were, and was brought in at our window. The distance between the windows was about 7 feet 6 inches, and there was not the slightest foothold between them, nor was there more than a twelve-inch projection to each window, which served as a ledge to put flowers on. We heard the window in the next room lifted up, and almost immediately after we saw Home floating in the air outside our window. The moon was shining full into the room; my back was to the light, and I saw the shadow on the wall of the window-sill, and Home's feet about six inches above it. He remained in this position for a few seconds, then raised the window and glided into the room, feet foremost, and sat down."

Lord Adare's account of this incident is as follows :

"We heard Home go into the next room, heard the window thrown up, and presently Home appeared, standing upright outside our window; he opened the window and walked in quite coolly."

Lord Adare's account appears to have been written a few days after the incident. In February, 1877, the third witness, Captain Wynne, gives his testimony, in a letter to Home, as follows : "The fact of your

† Report, p. 214.



having gone out of one window and in at another I can swear to."

Here we have three separate accounts of what purports to be the most stupendous marvel of modern times. Let us examine each account separately. Lord Lindsay was the chief spokesman. What did he see and hear? He heard a sound which suggested to him that a window in the next room was being lifted up. Subsequently, sitting with his back to the window, he saw on the wall a shadow which he interpreted as that of Home "floating" outside the window, opening the window, and gliding into the room feet foremost. Even if the outside illumination had been good, and the shadows on the wall quite sharply defined, Lord Lindsay's testimony would amount to very little.

The shadows, we are given to understand, were cast by the moon, and Lord Lindsay could not of course determine from the shadow on which side of the window Home was standing. At most, he could testify that there was a space between Home's feet and the window-sill. But were the shadows sharply defined? On reference to the almanack, it will be found that the moon was *new* on December 13, 1868. A three-days-old moon (on the improbable assumption that the date quoted by Mrs. Home was correct) would not have afforded much light; a new moon is, of course, invisible. The only light which came through the window, it would seem, was that of the stars and the diffused light from the streets of London, eighty-five feet below.<sup>1</sup> Did this light enable Lord Lindsay to see anything at all?

<sup>1</sup> Lord Adare states that the room was on the *third* floor. Some one has blundered. Perhaps 85 is a misprint for 35.

But we have two other first-hand accounts. What do the other witnesses say? Captain Wynne, eight years afterwards, says he can swear to the fact. Lord Adare says: "We heard the window open, and presently Home appeared . . . outside the window." Appeared to whom? Lord Adare tells what he heard. Why does he not tell us what he saw? Is it not a little curious that two of the witnesses to this stupendous marvel should be content to give so meagre an account, without any details, and couched in such ambiguous language? And is it not still more curious that the task of describing the details should have been undertaken by the one member of the party who from his position could see nothing? If Lord Adare had really seen the whole drama, is it likely he would have left it to be told practically at second-hand? A comparison of the three accounts, and the ambiguous wording of the testimony given by Lord Adare and Captain Wynne, suggest that possibly none of the witnesses had their faces turned directly towards the window, and that Lord Lindsay was the only one of the three who made the attempt to distinguish between what he saw and what he inferred. For Lord Adare is not generally chary of detail. He records much more fully an incident which took place immediately after, an incident of which he was the only spectator:

At Home's request he had shut the window in the next room. On his return to the séance-room

"I remarked that the window was not raised a foot, and that I could not think how he [Home] had managed to squeeze through. He arose and said, 'Come and see.' I went with him; he told me to open the window as it was before. I did so; he told me to stand a little distance off; he then went through the open space, head first, quite

rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again feet foremost, and we returned to the other room. It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside. He did not appear to grasp, or rest upon, the balustrade, but rather to be swung out and in. Outside each window is a small balcony or ledge nineteen inches deep [*i.e.*, apparently, nineteen inches wide], bounded by stone balustrades eighteen inches high."

What really took place was probably somewhat as follows: Home had found in the three young men specially suggestible witnesses. Of Captain Wynne, indeed, we know little. But both Lord Lindsay and Lord Adare had frequently seen in Home's presence shadowy forms and lights, some of which, at any rate, were unquestionably hallucinatory. Home had prophesied to the former gentleman, who was quartered at the Tower, that he would have curious manifestations there from some of the dreadful spirits who haunted the place. The prophecy was made on November 20, 1868. A few days later, at the beginning of the next recorded séance with Home, Lord Lindsay reports that "he had had strong manifestations that evening when alone."<sup>1</sup> In the course of the same séance occurred what seems to have been a rehearsal of the miracle of December 13th:

"The room was nearly dark. We had physical manifestations. Home went into a trance; he walked about the room for some time, arranging the light and talking to himself; he then opened the window, drawing the curtain, so that we could see nothing but his head, and got outside the window. This frightened us, and Lindsay wanted to stop him, but did not. Presently he came back, and told us that we had no faith whatever or we would not have been alarmed for his safety."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Experiences," p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Adare, in "Experiences," p. 77.

Later in the same sitting occurred the levitation already referred to, in which Home brushed against the pictures. The record of this séance (of which, as already said, the date is not given) immediately precedes the record of the séance of December 13th.

It will be seen that Home on this occasion seems to have begun preparing the minds of his sitters for what they were to witness later. At the séance of December 13th the same process was continued. Lord Lindsay at the beginning of the sitting "saw two spirits on the sofa, and others in different places." Various deceased acquaintances—Adah Menken, little Dannie Cox, and E.—held impressive communications through the medium's voice with those present. E.'s repentant tears were so hot as to leave a red mark on Lord Adare's hand—an incident curiously suggestive of a mesmeric experiment.

"Home then got up and walked about the room. He was both elongated and raised in the air. He spoke in a whisper, as though the spirits were arranging something. He then said to us, 'Do not be afraid, and on no account leave your places'; and he went out into the passage. Lindsay suddenly said, 'Oh, good heavens! I know what he is going to do; it is too fearful.'

"Adare: 'What is it?'

"Lindsay: 'I cannot tell you; it is too horrible! Adah [the spirit of the deceased actress Adah Menken] says that I must tell you; he is going out of the window in the other room, and coming in at this window.'"<sup>1</sup>

Immediately after these words there follow the three lines descriptive of the levitation already quoted from Lord Adare's record.

What, no doubt, happened was that Home, having

<sup>1</sup> P. 82.

noisily opened the window in the next room, slipped back under cover of the darkness into the séance-room, got behind the curtains, opened the window, and stepped on to the window-ledge.

Was ever drama so slenderly staged? Did ever dramatist more cunningly excite the pity and terror of his audience? Did ever audience lend themselves more greedily to the melodramatic illusion? Did ever miracle receive such casual attestation? <sup>1</sup>

The phenomenon of the elongation of various parts of Home's person, and of his whole body, is frequently described in the years 1867-70. Some accounts of the phenomenon certainly suggest that the appearance of elongation may have been produced by quite normal means, and imply less ingenuity on the part of the medium than simplicity on the part of the spectators. In a case of elongation of the hand observed by Mr. H. D. Jencken in 1869 a tracing is given of the right hand in its normal position, and as elongated, the two outlines overlapping. The extra elongation, in this case, of the thumb and index finger is rather less than an inch; in the remaining fingers it slightly exceeds an inch. To secure that the hand did not move the observer held his pencil pressed against the trapezium bone of the wrist, *i.e.*, at the point where the thumb joins the wrist. No other precautions are said to have been taken. So small a difference in length would easily be produced if Home at the outset had slightly flexed his fingers—the hand

<sup>1</sup> See the criticism of this famous séance by Miss Alice Johnson (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. pp. 490—97), to whom I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness for the correction in the date of the séance, which had hitherto escaped my observation, and for some additional points in the case.



rested palm downwards—so that they did not lie flat on the paper throughout their length, and afterwards extended them to their full length, at the same time rotating the whole hand on the trapezium as a pivot. The tracing shows that, in fact, such a slight rotation did take place, and in the direction required, viz., to the left.<sup>1</sup>

The phenomenon on this occasion is said to have taken place in a well-lighted room. Generally, however, the lights had been lowered before the manifestation took place, and the room was in partial obscurity. General Boldero witnessed an incident of the kind on February 4, 1870. His account was written on the following day. After the séance, which took place in a private house in Edinburgh, had been proceeding for some time, Home summoned two ladies and General Boldero to leave the circle and accompany him. They went with him to the library—

“The library opened on to the landing, where there was a bright gaslight, but the room itself had no light. . . . In a few minutes Home went off into a trance. He got up and walked about a little, and then came to me and took me by the hand, saying, ‘Will you look at Dan’s feet and see that he does not move them off the ground, and tell the others to look at his head.’ I watched, and saw his whole body elongated as much as nine inches or a foot. I went and felt his feet, and found them on the ground. I must tell you that he was standing where the light of the gas on the landing fell upon him. It was an extraordinary sight. He then said, ‘Come here,’ so I went back to him. He was still of prolonged stature. He took both my hands, and placed them on each side of his waist, above the hips; there was a vacuum between his waistcoat and trousers. ‘Feel Dan, that you may be satisfied’; and surely enough

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<sup>1</sup> “Human Nature,” vol. iii. p. 140.



he came back to his own size, and I could feel the flesh shrink. He again was elongated, and I could feel his flesh stretch and again shrink." <sup>1</sup>

Here, if we take into account the nature of the light, and the fact that the three witnesses had been specially selected, no doubt for their suggestibility, we shall scarcely find the incident as impressive as it appeared to General Boldero. It is to be noted that General Boldero did not feel the feet until he had seen the elongation. There is no proof, therefore, that the feet were flat on the ground when the elongation reached the extreme limit of nine inches or more.

When H. D. Jencken was witness of an elongation by the light of a candle held in Home's hand he estimated the increase in height at four inches only.<sup>2</sup>

The Master of Lindsay was again fortunate in witnessing an elongation of considerable extent by the light of a candle. In his evidence before the Dialectical Society he states :

"On another occasion I saw Mr. Home, in a trance, elongated eleven inches. I measured him standing up against the wall, and marked the place. Not being satisfied with that, I put him in the middle of the room and placed a candle in front of him, so as to throw a shadow on the wall, which I also marked. When he awoke I measured him again in his natural size, both directly and by the shadow, and the results were equal. I can swear that he was not off the ground or standing on tiptoe, as I had full view of his feet ; and, moreover, a gentleman present had one of his feet placed over Home's insteps, one hand on his shoulder, and the other on his side where the false ribs come near the hip-bone."

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, July, 1889, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> "Human Nature," vol. ii. p. 611.

Later, in answer to questions, Lord Lindsay supplemented his evidence as follows :

“ The top of the hip-bone and the short ribs separate. In Home they were unusually close together. There was no separation of the vertebræ of the spine ; nor were the elongations at all like those resulting from expanding the chest with air ; the shoulders did not move. Home looked as if he was pulled up by the neck ; the muscles seemed in a state of tension. He stood firmly upright in the middle of the room, and before the elongation commenced, I placed my foot on his instep. I will swear he never moved his heels from the ground. When Home was elongated against the wall, Lord Adare placed his foot on Home’s instep, and I marked the place on the wall. I once saw him elongated horizontally on the ground ; Lord Adare was present. Home seemed to grow at both ends, and pushed myself and Adare away.”

I cannot identify in Lord Adare’s “ Experiences ” any reference to the particular occasion referred to by Lord Lindsay. But Mr. Hawkins Simpson has given an account of an elongation at which he assisted Lord Lindsay in testing the phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> If this was the occasion referred to in the first of the extracts, the accounts of the two witnesses differ in material points.

Several professional mediums, Herne, Morse, Peters, are said also to have exhibited elongation of the body. We have, as said, no contemporary account of the manifestation in the case of Home which can be relied on as giving an accurate description of what took place. For Lord Lindsay’s account was written some time after the incidents, and Lord Adare’s contemporary notes are, on this particular phenomenon, so meagre as to be of little value in elucidating the subject. Where, as in the two cases already cited from H. D. Jencken,

<sup>1</sup> Printed in *Journal S.P.R.* for July, 1889, p. 123.

the light was good and the incident contemporaneously recorded, no supernatural explanation would seem to be required. The effect produced on the observers is certainly remarkable, and the illusion, if illusion it were, not easy to understand. But we have not the necessary data for attempting an explanation. We can only note that the phenomenon was vouchsafed to none but a few specially selected witnesses.

Perhaps the most puzzling of all Home's feats was the fire-test. The evidence for this is fairly abundant, and of good quality. In many cases, no doubt, we can see how the results may have been effected by normal means. Thus, to take an oft-quoted case, Mrs. S. C. Hall, on July 5, 1869, gives the following account of an incident which took place at a séance "several weeks" previously. The séance was held in a back drawing-room; a fire was blazing in the large front room. Home went into the front room. He poked the fire,

"held his hand over the fire for some time, and finally drew out of the fire, with his hand, a huge lump of live, burning coal, so large that he held it in both hands, as he came from the fireplace in the large room into the smaller room, where, seated round the round table, we were all watching his movements. Mr. Hall was seated nearly opposite to where I sat, and I saw Mr. Home, after standing *for about half a minute*<sup>1</sup> at the back of Mr. Hall's chair, deliberately place the lump of burning coal on his head. I have often since wondered that I was not frightened. But I was not; I had perfect faith that he would not be injured. Some one said, 'Is it not hot?' Mr. Hall answered, 'Warm, but not hot.' Mr. Home had moved a little away, but returned, still in the trance. He smiled, and seemed quite pleased, and then proceeded to draw up Mr. Hall's

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<sup>1</sup> Italics not in the original.

white hair over the red coal. The white hair had the appearance of silver threads, over the red coal. Mr. Home drew the hair into a sort of pyramid, the coal still showing red beneath the hair; then, after, I think, *four or five minutes*,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Home pushed the hair back, and, taking the coal off Mr. Hall's head, he said, addressing Mrs. Y., 'Will you have it?' She drew back, and I heard him murmur, 'Little faith.' Two or three attempted to touch it, but it burnt their fingers. I said, 'Daniel, bring it to me; I do not fear to take it.' It was not red all over, but it was still red in parts. I put out my right hand, but he murmured, 'No, not that; the other hand.' . . . He then placed it in my left hand. I felt it warm, yet when I stooped down to examine the coal, my face felt the heat so much that I was obliged to withdraw it."<sup>2</sup>

The account is several weeks old, and has probably not lost in the telling. Yet, even as it stands, we can see that any conjurer could have done as much. The conjurer would have provided himself with a piece of slag from the furnaces, a large cinder, or some other good non-conductor, on which he would place the live coal. He would wait—half a minute or so—until the heat had sufficiently moderated before placing the cold cinder and its burden on Mr. Hall's head. That the white hair was seen as white is sufficient proof that the coal was not really glowing red. Had that been the case, any object that intercepted the glow would have appeared black. The conjurer would then wait four or five minutes, by which time the original lump of coal would probably have cooled sufficiently to be held in the hand without serious inconvenience. The prepared cinder or slag would then be withdrawn, as we may infer from the fact that Mrs. Hall held with-

<sup>1</sup> Italics not in the original.

<sup>2</sup> "Experiences in Spiritualism," by Lord Adare, p. 178.

out difficulty in one hand what Home had held in two. The two or three who were "burnt" were probably burnt in their own imagination.

Sir William Crookes has recorded three instances of the fire test. The first account is extracted from a contemporary letter to Mrs. Honynwood, describing a séance which took place on April 28, 1871 :

"At Mr. Home's request, whilst he was entranced, I went with him to the fireplace in the back drawing-room. He said, 'We want you to notice particularly what Dan is doing.' Accordingly, I stood close to the fire and stooped down to it, when he put his hands in. He very deliberately pulled the lumps of hot coal off, one at a time, with his right hand, and touched one which was bright red. He then said : 'The power is not strong on Dan's hand, as we have been influencing the handkerchief most. It is more difficult to influence an inanimate body like that than living flesh, so, as the circumstances were favourable, we thought we would show you that we could prevent a red-hot coal from burning a handkerchief. We will collect more power on the handkerchief and repeat it before you. Now !'"

"Mr. Home then waved the handkerchief about in the air two or three times, held it above his head, and then folded it up and laid it on his hand like a cushion ; putting his other hand into the fire, he took out a large lump of cinder, red-hot at the lower part, and placed the red part on the handkerchief. Under ordinary circumstances, it would have been in a blaze. In about half a minute he took it off the handkerchief with his hand, saying, 'As the power is not strong, if we leave the coal longer it will burn.' He then put it on his hand and brought it to the table in the front room, where all but myself had remained seated." <sup>1</sup>

Again, a conjurer could do as much with a prepared handkerchief. The waving of the handkerchief in the air may have been the opportunity for substitution, if—what is not expressly stated—the handkerchief ostensibly to be used had been previously inspected.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. pp. 103, 104.



The next case can be explained in the same way. The account of the test is extracted from the detailed notes of a séance which took place on May 9, 1871. At the beginning of the sitting the room was lit by a wood fire, somewhat dull, and by four candles. During the fire test two of the candles were put out. After passing his fingers slowly through a candle-flame, Home took up

“ a fine cambric handkerchief belonging to Miss Douglas, folded it up on his right hand, and went to the fire. Here he threw off the bandage from his eyes, and, by means of the tongs, lifted a piece of red-hot charcoal from the centre, and deposited it on the folded cambric ; bringing it across the room, he told us to put out the candle which was on the table, knelt down close to Mrs. W. F., and spoke to her about it in a low voice. Occasionally he fanned the coal to a white heat with his breath. Coming a little farther round the room, he spoke to Miss Douglas, saying, ‘ We shall have to burn a very small hole in the handkerchief. We have a reason for this, which you do not see.’ Presently he took the coal back to the fire and handed the handkerchief to Miss Douglas. A small hole, about half an inch in diameter, was burnt in the centre, and there were two small points near it, but it was not even singed anywhere else. (I took the handkerchief away with me, and, on testing it in my laboratory, found that it had not undergone the slightest chemical preparation which could have rendered it fire-proof.) ”

The candle on the table had been blown out, by Home’s desire, before he reached it, and we cannot share Sir W. Crookes’ confidence that the handkerchief on which, in the carefully prepared obscurity, Miss Douglas saw the hot charcoal resting, was the same handkerchief which he afterwards tested in his laboratory. The re-substitution and the burning of the original handkerchief could have been effected when Home took the coal back to the fire.



But the last instance described by Sir William Crookes, which took place immediately after the incident just given, seems, if accurately recorded, beyond the possibilities of the conjurer's art.

“ Mr. Home again went to the fire, and, after stirring the hot coal about with his hand, took out a red-hot piece nearly as big as an orange, and, putting it on his right hand, covered it over with his left hand so as to almost completely enclose it, and then blew into the small furnace thus extemporised until the lump of charcoal was nearly white-hot, and then drew my attention to the lambent flame which was flickering over the coal and licking round his fingers ; he fell on his knees, looked up in a reverent manner, held up the coal in front, and said : ‘ Is not God good ? Are not His laws wonderful ? ’ ”

Again, Lord Adare describes <sup>1</sup> a case in which Home, “ kneeling down, placed his face right among the burning coals, moving it about as though bathing it in water.” Mrs. Honynood and Lord Lindsay, in a joint communication to the Dialectical Society,<sup>2</sup> describe an occasion in which Home took a chimney from a lighted lamp and thrust it into the red-hot coals, leaving it there for four or five minutes. To test the heat he then asked his hostess to apply a match to it—the match instantly ignited. Home then thrust the chimney into his mouth, applying his tongue to it. Other descriptions almost equally marvellous will be found in the literature of the period.

It is not easy to see how simple trickery could explain some of the phenomena attested, such as the last incident quoted from Sir W. Crookes' contemporary notes, or the elongation of Home's person by

<sup>1</sup> “ Experiences,” p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> “ Report of the Dialectical Society,” p. 361.

candlelight as described by the Master of Lindsay. We almost seem to be driven, as Mr. Feilding and his colleagues have suggested in their report on Eusapia's manifestations, to accept the alternatives of a new force or a collective hallucination.

But "hallucination" has an alarming sound to modern ears. Its original meaning is simply wandering in mind, or dreaminess, what would technically be called slight dissociation of consciousness. Suppose, then, we substitute for "hallucination" a word charged with less portentous significance, and say that the choice lies between a new force and some form of sense-deception. As regards the first alternative, it may perhaps be admitted that a force which was capable of depressing a balance, playing an accordion, distributing flowers, and unscrewing the canopy of an oriental idol, might conceivably be capable of carrying a slenderly built man round the room. But it is a little difficult to suppose that the same force could stretch his bodily frame to the extent of a foot or so, or could render not only his own skin but that of his elected witnesses immune alike to the pain and to the physical effects of fire. And if we add all the other phenomena vouched for by competent witnesses, including Sir W. Crookes himself, raps, spirit lights, even semi-material mimics of the complete human form, we must suppose—that is, if we allow ourselves to be guided by terrestrial analogies at all—that we have to deal, not with one new force, but with many. We are surely not justified in doing more than casting a glance at such a possibility before we have, at any rate, attempted to find a cheaper solution elsewhere.

Now, hallucination has, as said, an alarming sound. It suggests a blue dog, or the thronging apparitions which burdened the life of Nicolai and the half-mythical Mrs. A. But, in fact, we are all of us constantly experiencing minor hallucinations of one kind or another. What we see is not simply a reflection in the brain of the picture painted on the retina. That is merely the raw material which the brain has to work up. The act of seeing is an intellectual process, involving memory, comparison, reflection, and judgment. Of course, in ordinary circumstances, and under favourable conditions, the intellectual factor is reduced to a minimum, and the brain has little chance of making a mistake—a hallucination, in fact. But the intellectual or creative element is always there, and shows itself when necessary. Two common instances of sense-deception will illustrate its action. It must have occurred to most of us occasionally to see a simple geometrical pattern, on wall-papers, tiles, or in a book on geometry, which could be interpreted by the eye in two different ways as the representation of two different solid objects. The brain chooses one of two interpretations—that is, in the act of interpreting it adds to the data of sense. Here is another, probably less familiar, illustration. Prick a small hole in a postcard and look through it at a lighted lamp. You will see the lamp in its ordinary position. Now between the eye and the pinhole insert a pin, head upwards. You will see the monstrous image of a pin *head downwards*. In fact, the image of the lamp coming through the pinhole is inverted; but the brain knows that lighted lamps don't occur upside down, and automatically corrects the image. But the image

of the pin is painted on the retina in the opposite direction to that of the lamp, and the same intellectual process which presented to our perception the topsy-turvy lamp right side up necessarily presents the upright pin topsy-turvy.

When the data derived from the retina are scanty, as in a bad light, the brain has a good deal of work to do to fill in the picture, and frequently fills it in incorrectly. We are all familiar with occasional mis-carriages in this process of construction on too slender a basis—*e.g.*, in walking through a wood on a dark night. But sometimes the senses are presented with data which are intentionally misleading. A conjurer takes a ball in his hand and makes the motion of throwing it across the stage. Almost simultaneously is heard the sound as of the ball falling into a metal bowl. How many brains correctly interpret the sensory data? <sup>1</sup>

Now, in all the cases before us we have these two conditions favouring sense-deception—an imperfect light and the intention on the part of the performer to mislead. But in Home's case, as is shown in the last chapter, and in most cases of so-called spirit manifestations, we have another factor, probably more favourable than either of them—exaltation of the emotions, especially the religious emotions. How

<sup>1</sup> Some further experiments on the psychology of conjuring are much to be desired. Professor Jastrow ("Fact and Fable in Psychology") has a suggestive chapter on the subject. He quotes an experiment made by Mr. Triplett, in which, after several actual throws, the performer made the gesture of throwing a ball into the air, but actually kept it in his hands. Out of 165 children, 78 described how they had seen the ball go up and disappear.

powerful may be the effect of stimulating the religious feelings can be seen in the innumerable miraculous visions in the annals of the Church. A modern instance will be found in the apparitions at Knock a generation ago. Another instance occurred at Remiremont, in the Vosges, in 1907. Owing to the risk of a riot between the clerical and anti-clerical parties, the civic authorities had thought it necessary to prohibit a specially important religious procession in honour of the local Madonna. A few days later, on May 26th, occurred a fall of large oval hailstones, in which more than a hundred devout Catholics, men, women, and children, declared on oath that they had recognised images of the Madonna.<sup>1</sup>

The last illustration furnishes, no doubt, an extreme instance of what may fairly be called hallucination, and suggests, what would naturally be inferred from other considerations, that of the three factors indicated as favourable, viz., insufficiency and uncertainty of sensory data, deliberate false suggestion, and emotional exaltation, the last is by far the most potent in inducing sense-deception.

We find a possible illustration in an allied field. We have numerous accounts of what are called Poltergeist phenomena, in which naughty little girls surreptitiously throw stones, crockery, and miscellaneous articles. Now, many of the witnesses in these cases report that the things seemed to glide or hover through the air—moving much more slowly than if they were actually thrown. Now, we know in many cases, and we

<sup>1</sup> An account of the incident will be found in the Catholic paper *La Croix*. The matter was investigated by M. Sage in September, 1908. See his report in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. p. 405.



may fairly infer in all cases, that the articles were really thrown. We have seen the little girls in the act of throwing them ; we have received confessions that they have thrown them. This peculiar appearance of moving slowly is consistent with the supposition that, in the excitement of the moment—and many of the witnesses believed themselves to be seeing something supernatural—there was a slight dissociation of consciousness, dreaminess, on the part of the spectators. From observations on the gradual disintegration of consciousness under anæsthetics we learn that one of the first effects noticed is a disturbance of the kinæsthetic sense, in consequence of which muscular movements seem of much longer duration than they actually are. We judge, of course, of the speed of external movement mainly by the sensation of movement in our own eye muscles in following the object from point to point. A man in the early stages of chloroform or haschisch intoxication would see a stone or a saucer moving slowly through the air.<sup>1</sup>

Now, let us apply this modified theory of collective sense-deception to Home's performances. Personally I find no difficulty whatever in explaining the whole of the recorded feats of levitation, whether of Home, Gordon, Eusapia, or Stainton Moses, as simply instances of rather crude sense-deception in which the sensory data played an extremely small part. All the favouring conditions are present—a dim light, subtle suggestion on the part of the medium, and a considerable degree of emotional exaltation. But I find it more difficult

<sup>1</sup> See Elmer E. Jones's article in the *Psychological Review* (Baltimore, U.S.A.) for January, 1909 ; and Ernest Dunbar, in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xix. p. 69, "The Action of Drugs on Consciousness."



to apply the explanation to the phenomenon of elongation. I cannot readily represent to my imagination the mental processes by which two intelligent men holding a lighted candle and taking special steps to correct their measurements—even though these steps appear to me not specially well devised—could have supposed Home's body to be abnormally lengthened, when he was really, let us say, only standing on tiptoe and stretching himself. But it must be remembered that this manifestation was vouchsafed to very few witnesses, and that two of these witnesses—the Master of Lindsay and Lord Adare—were highly suggestible, and had frequently seen in Home's presence figures which can hardly have been anything but hallucinations.

The difficulty is quite as great with the red-hot coal performance. Some of the instances, indeed, as shown, can be explained by simple sleight of hand. And there are many parallels, or seeming parallels, to be found in magical and religious ceremonies all the world over; the marvel depending, so far as the reports of travellers will enable one to judge, partly on endurance, partly on preparation of the skin by drugs, most of all, perhaps, on skilfully staged illusion. But the testimony to Home's feats is abundant; and it is difficult to see how Sir W. Crookes, if in full possession of his normal senses, could be mistaken in describing the flames licking Home's fingers.

We don't quite see how some of the things were done, and we leave the subject with an almost painful sense of bewilderment. But to say that because we cannot understand some of the feats, therefore they must have been due to spirits or psychic force, is merely an opiate for the uneasiness of suspended judgment, a refuge from the trouble of thinking.

## CHAPTER III

### EUSAPIA PALLADINO

CONCURRENTLY with the retirement of Home into private life shortly after his second marriage in 1871, the character of the spiritualist movement underwent a subtle change. Home, as I have endeavoured to show, relied for his success mainly upon the psychological atmosphere which he himself created. But he found no worthy successor. Future performers were for the most part of much coarser type, and less gifted by nature. Whilst still employing the appeal to the emotions and affections of the sitters, now somewhat staled by frequent repetition, they relied mostly on mechanical effects ; and the sitters—as the enthusiasm of the first two decades, the age of Robert Chambers, William Howitt, the De Morgans, and the Wilkinsons, died out—insisted on holding the medium's hands and introducing other precautions against fraud. From 1870 to 1890 circles were mostly held in almost complete darkness ; the sitters would hold the medium's hands and each other's ; or if, as was frequently the case from this point onwards, the medium sat in a " cabinet," for materialisations, two of the sitters would be appointed to tie him to his chair and take other measures to prevent fraud. The supreme manifestation of this period was the materialisation, under such

conditions, of the human form. But this was also the era of slate-writing and spirit photography. The annals of spiritualism, hitherto happily vacant, were now diversified by frequent exposures of fraud—the exhibition of stuffed spirit hands, mediums masquerading in dirty muslin and false beards, spirit lights of phosphorised oil, trick slates, and doubly exposed photographs. The whole subject fell into increasing disrepute. Professor and Mrs. H. Sidgwick, F. W. H. Myers, and Edmund Gurney, who had in the early part of this period made experiments with several mediums, reached the broad conclusion that the phenomena degenerated precisely in the ratio in which the precautions against trickery were rendered more effective, until sometimes a point was reached at which, the safeguards being absolute, the manifestations ceased altogether. On the foundation of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882 the first President, Henry Sidgwick, laid it down that the Society could not encourage fraud by experimenting further with professional mediums, but proposed to invite the co-operation of private persons gifted with similar powers. To this appeal there was practically no response. Beyond the valuable exposure—through the labours chiefly of Dr. Hodgson, Mrs. Sidgwick, and Mr. S. J. Davey—of the methods employed in spirit slate-writing, no effective work was done by the Society in this field. In short, the whole subject seemed likely to die out like a candle flame, leaving a malodorous memory behind it. Then, in 1892, Eusapia Palladino appeared on the scene. Eusapia—for by universal consent the gifted Neapolitan, she, too, an artist, has been assigned a place amongst her immortal fellow-

countrymen who are known through the ages by their Christian names alone—Eusapia, then, is an Italian peasant woman, who from her early youth has been possessed of mediumistic powers.

In the autumn of 1892 a committee, amongst whom were M. Schiaparelli, Director of the Astronomical Observatory at Milan, Professor Gerosa, Professor Brofferio, and M. Aksakof, held a series of sittings at Milan with Eusapia. Professor Lombroso and Professor C. Richet were present at some of the meetings, and a statement by the latter of his own observations was published, together with the formal report of the Committee, in the January-February number, 1893, of the *Annales des Sciences Psychiques*. The phenomena observed were of a familiar kind: tilting and levitation of tables and other movements of furniture, alteration of the weight of the medium in the balance, raps, and the appearance and contact of hands in the dark, or in semi-obscurity. That the reports of the Milan Committee were held to deserve more respectful consideration than the innumerable other accounts of similar manifestations was due mainly to the high scientific standing of the witnesses, and the obvious care and freedom from prepossession with which their observations were for the most part made and recorded.

The phenomena most frequently observed, and which presented, apparently, the best opportunity for excluding fraud, since they took place in a fairly good light, were the levitation of the table and the alteration of the medium's weight in the balance. The table was a common kitchen-table, with four legs, 3 feet 8 inches long, by 2 feet 4 inches wide, and weighing about 17 lbs. Professor Richet, who had

witnessed the levitation of the table on several occasions, described it as follows :

“ Eusapia, seated at one end of the table, gave her right hand to one of the investigators, and her left hand to another. Usually in the experiments at which I assisted, M. Schiaparelli held her right hand, and I held her left. The other persons stood more or less aloof, so that the two table legs at the end farthest from Eusapia could be seen, and the two at her end of the table, and between which she had placed her legs, knees, and feet, were visible all, or almost all, the time.

“ After various movements, during which there were partial liftings, now of one foot, now of another, the table was suddenly lifted up, all four feet being raised slightly from the ground, from about three to five inches. But in several instances (when there was little or no light) it seemed to me that the table legs were lifted off the ground to a height of from eight to ten inches. This only lasted for a short time, difficult to estimate, but which I take to have been about one or two seconds. Nevertheless, on one occasion, at the second séance, the table appeared to me to be raised from the ground for about three seconds, with a sort of swaying, rocking motion in the air. The room was lighted during the experiments.”

The light in some cases was sufficiently good to allow of photographs being taken. A copy of one photograph, appended to Professor Richet's article, shows the table suspended horizontally some inches above the floor, whilst Eusapia's hands were held, on the surface of the table, by Professors Richet and Lombroso respectively, the former having his other hand pressed on the medium's knees, and his left foot in contact with one of her feet. Two other members of the Committee were watching the proceedings at a little distance from the table.

I have described this feat in detail, not in accord-



ance with my own estimate of its importance, but because these levitations of the table have filled a large part in all subsequent investigations of Eusapia's phenomena.

In fact, though the light was often fairly good during this particular feat, the degree of illumination was nevertheless always prescribed by the medium. And under the conditions described, Eusapia sitting close to the table, her legs under it and part of her dress in actual contact with it, it seems practically impossible to prevent trickery. Feet, knees, or hands can all be used on occasion, even when all the limbs are supposed to be under observation; and there are mechanical appliances—*e.g.*, a hook, attached by a black tape to a band passing over her shoulders under her dress—which can be employed even in a fairly good light. In fact, nothing short of complete isolation of Eusapia from the table could effectually prevent fraud. The Milan Committee observed that the levitation of the table appears to have been generally preceded by a puffing out (*gonfler*) of Eusapia's dress until it touched and partially covered one foot of the table; and that when contact of the dress with the table was prevented the experiment failed. Further, the experiment also failed when Eusapia and the experimenters stood upright; and she refused to try the experiment sitting at one of the longer sides of the table or with a pasteboard screen placed round her dress.

The experiments with the balance, also made in a good light, were equally puzzling and equally inconclusive. First an ordinary platform weighing machine was used, and a diminution in weight amounting to



17 lbs. was observed. Richet and Schiaparelli, who were watching closely, reported :

“We are certain that she threw nothing away (if she had thrown anything away she would have had to recover it in order to restore her original weight), and equally certain that she derived no support from any neighbouring object. And, finally, the movement was sufficiently slow—it occupied from twelve to twenty seconds—to make it impossible to attribute it to a jump or quick movement of any kind. Nevertheless, the observation did not appear to us conclusive. In brief, in the ordinary weighing machine, constructed on the principle of the steelyard, the weight varies (although it is true within very narrow limits) with the position of the centre of gravity. By changing his position on the platform, especially when, as was the case here, the machine is not a very good one, the person being weighed can appreciably vary his weight.”

The Committee therefore devised a more accurate balance, in which the platform was suspended by all four corners. A slight diminution in weight was observed, but only when part of Eusapia's dress touched the floor. When this contact was prevented the balance remained steady.

The phenomena observed in the dark were inconclusive for another reason. To prevent fraud the medium's hands were held by her neighbours on either side. But, in Professor Richet's words,

“During the experiments, Eusapia generally has the right and left hands held differently. On one side her whole hand is firmly held; on the other side, instead of having her hand held by the person next her, she merely places her hand on his, but touches his hand with all five fingers, so that he can feel quite distinctly whether it is the right or the left hand with which he is in contact.

“This is what follows: At the moment when the manifestations are about to begin, the hand which is not being held, but which is lightly placed on the hand of the person

on that side (for the sake of simplicity we will suppose that it is Eusapia's right hand, though it is, in fact, sometimes the right, sometimes the left)—the right hand, then, becomes very unsteady, and begins to move about so rapidly that it is impossible to follow its movements; it shifts about every moment, and for the mere fraction of a second it is not felt at all; then it is felt again, and one could swear it is still the right hand."

In short, whilst the majority of the Committee were satisfied that some at least of the phenomena could not have been produced by trickery, Professor Richet, though much impressed by what he had witnessed, preferred to reserve his judgment.

Some two years later Professor Richet found opportunity for continuing the investigation at his own house on the Île Roubaud, in the Mediterranean, and later at Carqueiranne. He invited, amongst others, Sir Oliver Lodge and F. W. H. Myers to co-operate with him. Professor and Mrs. H. Sidgwick also attended some of the later sittings at Carqueiranne. The sittings were held in "semi-darkness"; the circle sitting round the table, in accordance with the almost invariable procedure in a séance with Eusapia, and the two observers on either side of the medium controlling her hands and feet and head. Professor Richet, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Mr. Myers were convinced that some at least of the things done were due to supernormal agency. Professor and Mrs. Sidgwick, who were present only during the latter part of this investigation, when the phenomena appear to have been less striking, were impressed, but not wholly convinced. Amongst the phenomena for which Sir Oliver Lodge specially vouched "as being the most easily and securely observed, and as being amply sufficient in themselves

to establish a scientifically unrecognised truth," were the movements of a distant chair, visible in the moon-light, bulging of curtain, sounding of notes of untouched piano and accordion, movement and uplifting of a heavy table, and other purposive movements of apparently distant objects; graspings and pattings of his hand, arm, and back, whilst the head, hands, and feet of the medium were under complete control and nowhere near the place touched. Further, the rude outline of a large face was seen against the background of the window; little lights like glow-worms were seen to flit about; some scent like verbena appeared on the medium's hands, and blue marks were made on the under surface of a table previously examined and found clean, and on part of Richet's shirtfront under his waistcoat. On another occasion, after the séance, Eusapia took Professor Richet's finger and drew it along a clean sheet of paper. The finger-nail was seen to leave a thick blue mark on the clean white paper, as if made by a blue pencil. This experiment took place in full candlelight, and was repeated several times, the movements of the finger being closely watched by the investigators. It should be added that the observers severally recorded their conviction that Eusapia's hands and feet were under adequate control throughout the séances, and that a note-taker was stationed in the verandah outside the room, who took down contemporary notes dictated to him from within.

Now, there is a time-honoured device, exposed in the seventies by Moncure Conway, and afterwards by Maskelyne and others, by which mediums at dark séances succeed in freeing themselves from the control

of the sitter. It may be described briefly as the art of making one hand (or one foot) do duty for two. Thus, if the hand is to be freed, the medium will contrive that one at least of his neighbours shall have control only of a part of his hand. During the séance, by a series of convulsive movements, such as are commonly observed in the case of Eusapia, and, indeed, in mediums generally, before the outburst of the physical manifestations, he will bring his two hands into close proximity on the table, and then, at a favourable moment, will withdraw one hand, leaving the other in contact at the same time with the hand of each of his neighbours, who will each, of course, believe that they are touching a different hand. Some device of the kind, it may be inferred from the description already quoted from Professor Richet, Eusapia had employed at the Milan investigation. The investigators of the Île Roubaud were not ignorant of this danger. Both hands and both feet of the medium were held or controlled, the hands, as a rule, being touched by the hands of one or more of the sitters, the feet controlled either by the hands or feet of an investigator, or by a piece of mechanism devised for the purpose. Moreover, the investigators reported that they frequently took occasion to assure themselves, before or after the occurrence of a manifestation, that the sitters detailed to guard the several parts of the medium's person were not neglecting their duty.

Nevertheless, when Sir Oliver Lodge's report and the detailed notes of the 1894 sittings reached Dr. Hodgson, then resident in Boston, he pointed out that the precautions described did not exclude trickery of the kind indicated; in place of explicit descriptions

of the method of holding, the contemporary notes furnished for the most part bare statements to the effect that Eusapia's hands, feet, and head were held by the sitters. A precise realisation of the nature of the trickery to be guarded against would have elicited from the sitters a correspondingly precise statement of the measures taken to prevent it. That such a precise statement was not forthcoming afforded in itself, he contended, a *prima facie* presumption that the danger was not fully realised.

Dr. Hodgson proceeded to analyse the descriptions given of the chief feats, and suggested explanations of some which had puzzled the investigators at the time. In his view all that had been described could be accounted for on the assumption that Eusapia could get a hand or foot free.

F. W. H. Myers, Sir O. Lodge, and Professor Richet each replied at length to Hodgson's criticisms. Each severally mentioned that they were fully aware of the danger referred to, and that, in fact, though it had not been thought necessary to make continual statements to that effect in the notes, the hands and feet were so held as to make fraud of the kind suggested impossible. Richet's assertions on this point were the most emphatic, and as coming from an investigator who had himself been the first to draw attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the control usually permitted, are, no doubt, entitled to considerable weight. He pointed out that he had previously attended fifteen séances with Eusapia in Milan and Rome, and that forty séances had been held under his direction at Carqueiranne and in the Île Roubaud, extending over a period of three months.



“ Pendant ces trois mois, déjà préparé par les expériences faites à Rome et à Milan, je n'ai pas songé à autre chose qu'à ce point très spécial, et cependant très important, de bien tenir la main, à manière a ne pas laisser cette main se libérer, prendre des objets, et me toucher au dos, au nez, au front. . . . Eh bien ! sans me croire plus habile et plus perspicace qu'il ne convient, il me semble que cette constant préoccupation, cette idée fixe, doit un peu me garantir du reproche d'avoir conclu à la légère. Il me semble qu'après trois mois d'exercice et de méditations on peut arriver à la certitude qu'on tient bien une main humaine.”<sup>1</sup>

And really to impute negligence on this point to Richet and his fellow-investigators would almost seem equivalent to imputing imbecility.

Not unnaturally, neither M. Richet nor Sir Oliver Lodge were at all shaken in their convictions by Hodgson's arguments. But F. W. H. Myers, if not shaken, was at least impressed by their weight. A further series of sittings was accordingly arranged for the following summer at Myers' house at Cambridge. As the attitude of the investigators at these sittings has been seriously, though, of course, unintentionally, misrepresented by many believers in Eusapia, I will quote the result in Myers' own words. Myers, at any rate, will not be accused of leanings towards incredulity ; and Hodgson, it should be pointed out, was not summoned from America to join the circle until the Cambridge investigators had already satisfied themselves that fraud was being habitually practised. In communicating the results to the Society for Psychical Research Myers said :

“ I cannot doubt that we observed much conscious and deliberate fraud, of a kind which must have needed long

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<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. vii. p. 68.



practice to bring it to its present level of skill. Nor can I find any excuse for her fraud (assuming that such excuse would be valid) in the attitude of mind of the persons, several of them distinguished in the world of science, who assisted in this inquiry. Their attitude was a fair and open one; in all cases they showed patience, and in several cases the impression first made on their minds was distinctly favourable. With growing experience, however, and careful observation of the precise conditions permitted or refused to us, the existence of some fraud became clear; and fraud was attempted when the tests were as good as we were allowed to make them, quite as indisputably as on the few occasions when our holding was intentionally left inadequate in order to trace more exactly the *modus operandi*. Moreover, the fraud occurred both in the medium's waking state and during her real or alleged trance.

"I do not think there is adequate reason to suppose that any of the phenomena at Cambridge were genuine."<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the tricks were effected in the manner already indicated by Hodgson, by the surreptitious freeing from control of a foot or hand. Sometimes the head seems to have been employed.

The effect of this experience was to weaken, though not wholly to destroy, the impression produced on Myers by the phenomena witnessed in the preceding summer. Sir Oliver Lodge retained his conviction unshaken, and so did Richet and the other continental investigators. A few years later, after witnessing some more of Eusapia's performances in Paris, Myers returned to his original allegiance, and formally avowed his renewed belief in the supernormal character of Eusapia's mediumship.<sup>2</sup>

After the exposure of systematic fraud in 1895 the Council of the Society for Psychical Research felt that

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. vii. p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to *Light*, February 18, 1899.

they would not be justified, either on ethical or scientific grounds, in prolonging the investigation. But from that date onward Eusapia's performances have been almost continuously exhibited before various groups of foreign investigators, chiefly French and Italian.

It would be futile to notice most of the reports printed. Eusapia's feats show little variation. Levitations of tables and movements of small objects—within the radius of three or four feet—remain still the most frequent and best attested phenomena. But of late years there seems to have been a tendency for hands, heads, and luminous appearances to show themselves more frequently through the curtains. Several impressions in clay have been obtained of what purport to be faces, hands, and feet ; but in all cases the impressions are indistinct and blurred. Eusapia herself has been levitated on to the table. With some specially favoured investigators Eusapia also gives materialisation séances, retiring for the purpose to the cabinet—an angle of the room screened off by a black curtain, which is habitually made use of in her later performances—and being there tied hand and foot to a couch. Dr. Venzano records having witnessed at such a séance no fewer than six different figures—a man, four women, and a child ; a woman and child appearing simultaneously.<sup>1</sup>

Many persons of scientific distinction, especially within the last three or four years, have investigated the phenomena and publicly proclaimed their conviction of their genuineness. Among the more distinguished of the converts are Professor Morselli, Camille Flammarion, and the late Professor Lombroso. The later

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of Psychological Science*, September, 1907.

investigators have not been contented with simple observation, but have employed self-registering instruments to record the movements of tables and other objects ; they have frequently been permitted to take photographs of the table during levitation, and have endeavoured to impose other scientific tests. In the early part of 1907 Doctors Herlitzka, Charles Foa, and Aggazzotti, assistants of Professor Mosso, the eminent physiologist, held some sittings with Eusapia in Turin. The observers saw phenomena—including the breaking up of a small table before their eyes, and the impression, by radio-activity, of four finger marks on a sensitised plate wrapped in black paper—which they regarded as unquestionably supernormal. They inferred that some kind of energy capable of acting on matter at a distance radiates from the nervous system of the medium. But the tests which they had specially prepared in order to render physical intervention on the part of Eusapia impossible unfortunately miscarried. At the first sitting a clockwork cylinder, covered with blackened paper, was placed inside a bell-glass, secured from interference by sealed tapes. The object of the test was to obtain a vertical mark on the cylinder ; and the key of the electric circuit through which this end could be accomplished was enclosed in a securely fastened and sealed cardboard box. In the event the sealed tapes were torn off from the bell-glass ; the lid of the cardboard box was forcibly removed, and the key then depressed. The test was thus rendered useless. Eusapia explained, however, that if woven material instead of cardboard had been used to protect the key, it could have been moved without interference with the apparatus. Acting

on the hint the experimenters prepared for the next séance a new apparatus. Inside the cabinet was placed a manometer—a U-shaped tube of mercury with a floating pointer which would automatically register any movements of the mercury on a scale. The tube was in connection with a vessel full of water, and closed with a rubber capsule. Pressure on the capsule would, of course, force up the mercury in the tube. The vessel of water was enclosed in a wooden box, the sides of which rose high above the capsule. The top of the capsule was blackened. In place of a lid the box was covered with cloth, so as to prevent pressure on the capsule by normal means. At the close of the séance the mercury was found to have risen ; but the cloth covering was torn. The experimenters still attach weight to the result of the experiment, on the ground that the wooden box was outside the cabinet, so that no one could have approached it without being seen. They add : “We do not know why the stuff which had covered the wooden box was torn. Certainly Eusapia did not understand the importance which would have attached to the experiment, if it had remained intact.”<sup>1</sup>

A further series of investigations was conducted in the same year by Professor Philippe Bottazzi, Director of the Physiological Institute at the University of Naples, assisted by six brother professors and one or two other gentlemen. No trouble was spared to test the phenomena and ascertain the conditions. At the beginning of each sitting the barometric pressure, the temperature, and the atmospheric saturation were recorded. Several pieces of apparatus—a letter

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of Psychical Science*, May, 1907.

balance, an electrical metronome, a commutator, a rubber ball in connection with a manometer—were placed on a table in the cabinet behind Eusapia, in connection with automatic registering machinery in another room ; and in the course of the séance several movements were registered of which the tracings are published. Other inexplicable phenomena were observed, such as a mandoline moving about by itself on the table, whilst Eusapia's hands lay in her lap. But again the only really conclusive test failed. A telegraph key had been securely enclosed in a wire cage, and this Eusapia and her spirit control " John " were unable to move.<sup>1</sup>

The most elaborate investigation of Eusapia's phenomena undertaken by continental experimenters is that conducted by the Institut Général Psychologique of Paris. Forty-three sittings in all were held in three successive years, 1905, 1906, 1907. Of the investigators the best known were M. and Madame Curie. The circle seems to have included several other competent physicists, and the apparatus employed in the inquiry was as well devised as it was, unfortunately, for the most part unproductive. The general arrangements were those usually made at séances with Eusapia. Part of the room in which the séance was held was partitioned off by a pair of black curtains. Inside this " cabinet " was placed a light stool (weighing between three and four pounds), one or two musical instruments, a saucer full of clay, and a few objects covered with lamp-black, &c. In front of the curtains was placed a table, thirty-three inches long by twenty

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of Psychical Science*, October and December, 1907.



inches wide. The table was placed with one end (*i.e.*, one of the shorter sides) parallel with the curtains. At this end Eusapia sat, with her back to the curtains. The investigators sat round the table, linking hands, those on either side of the medium undertaking the control of her hands and feet. The room in which the séance was held was illuminated at one time by gas, at another by oil lamps or electric light, arrangements being made in each case to lower the light to the required degree of obscurity in accordance with the medium's request.

More critical than most of their predecessors, the Committee dwell at considerable length upon the extremely unsatisfactory nature of the control generally and the conditions of illumination.

Moreover, they point out that the controllers are also, from their position, the chief observers, for Eusapia will rarely tolerate an isolated observer near the scene of action. Thus their attention is kept constantly on the strain, and constantly liable to be diverted by the occurrence of unexpected phenomena—unexpected alike in the time of their occurrence, their nature, and their position. Further, Eusapia frequently requests the investigators to talk, a request which, whether designedly or not, has the effect of still further distracting the attention of the controllers. The most perfect control would be that Eusapia's feet should be held by the hands of a controller under the table, and that her hands should be held on the table, each grasped fully, so that the thumbs could be identified. But Eusapia rarely permits one of the investigators to be under the table. Her feet are generally controlled by being placed over or



under the feet of the controller-observer on either side. Unfortunately, the Committee found that she suffered from a painful corn on the right foot, so that this foot had generally to be placed on the left foot of her neighbour instead of under it.

As to her hands, she practically insists on the method of control already described ; one hand may, as a rule, be clasped, but the other must lie free, resting wholly or partly on the hand of her neighbour. This preference of hers is due, as would appear from her statement to the Committee of the *Institut*, to cutaneous hyperæsthesia, which makes it difficult for her to tolerate pressure on the hand for long together.<sup>1</sup> It is not stated whether she has an equally good reason for constantly placing her hands together in her lap, thus removing them into still deeper obscurity, or for occasionally enveloping one of them in the curtain, so that the controller's hand is no longer in direct contact with hers.

Again, one of the invariable concomitants of the manifestations is the incessant agitation of Eusapia's limbs—sometimes she swings her leg, which her neighbour has to control. Much more frequently, however, it is her hands which are in almost continual motion. All these conditions and peculiarities are not, of course, incompatible with innocence. But they certainly facilitate fraud, and fraud of the kind which Eusapia is known habitually to practise—the substitution of hands. A conspicuous instance of this kind occurred in the course of these séances. This is what happened :

“ L'obscurité avait été rapidement demandée : on avait éteint toutes les lumières et l'on avait entr'ouvert les rideaux-

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<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 517, &c.

tentures d'une fenêtre pour éclairer un peu, par le rayonnement du gaz de la rue, la Salle des Séances. M. Courtier contrôlait la droite d'Eusapia, en tournant le dos à la fenêtre ; M. de Mech contrôlait la gauche. Eusapia libéra, par son procédé ordinaire, sa main droite.

" M. de Mech gardant volontairement le silence, elle appuya fortement sa main gauche sur la main gauche de M. Courtier, et replia sans doute d'une manière fort habile son petit doigt gauche introduit entre l'annulaire et l'auriculaire de M. Courtier, de manière à lui donner l'illusion pendant quelques instants qu'il contrôlait toujours le pouce droit.

" A ce même moment, M. Courtier voyait un bras blanc soulever de son côté le rideau et l'écarter. Une tête apparaissait brusquement et se penchait vers lui en poussant un gémissement. M. de Mech voyait à ce même instant la silhouette d'Eusapia se détacher sur la bande de lumière venant de la rue et s'incliner vers M. Courtier.

" Qui plus est, M. Courtier se sentit pris aux épaules par deux bras, pendant qu'une tête, sous le rideau cette fois, s'appuyait contre la sienne. Eusapia venait de se libérer des deux contrôles, et ses mouvements avaient été si rapides qu'après l'impression du choc, M. Courtier retrouvait sur sa main gauche la main droite d'Eusapia " (pp. 524, 525).

The investigators loyally complied with the conditions imposed, but sought in various ways to devise tests which should still be valid. The really valuable part of their report is the history of the successive rejections or evasions of their tests by Eusapia. At one time they suggested that the sleeves of the medium should be sewn to the sleeves of the controllers' coats by tapes four inches long. She accepted this method of control on three occasions only—one in each year—and then refused to have anything more to do with it, giving as her reason that she had seen lunatics fastened together in this manner in an asylum, and that the recollection was unbearable.

One of the most frequent phenomena was the "levitation" of the séance table. The Committee put each leg of the table into a separate electric circuit, and succeeded by this means in proving that all four legs did actually leave the ground, and that Eusapia's foot was not placed under any of them. By means of a thread and pulley they proved that the apparent movements of the little stool—which would advance and retreat on the floor in a puzzling fashion—really took place as they appeared to do. Further, Eusapia permitted the employment of photographic apparatus on the condition that she gave the signal for the camera. Three of the photographs here reproduced, taken from a position facing the medium, show the little stool against the background of the dark curtain, apparently suspended in the air over the medium. But a fourth photograph, taken simultaneously on the last occasion from the side, shows that the stool was actually supported, in quite normal fashion, by Eusapia's head. Unfortunately, Eusapia saw this last photograph, and the cameras, which henceforth lay in wait to right and left, were balked of their prey, for the little stool was levitated no more.

But the Committee obtained another solid result by the use of scientific apparatus. They placed Eusapia upon the platform of a weighing machine. Now, Eusapia tolerates human "control"—she understands men and women; but she has a rooted antipathy to scientific apparatus of any kind. Apparently in order to avoid hurting her feelings, the Committee employed a novel kind of balance, somewhat less delicate, it is true, than the ordinary platform weighing machine, but still adequate for their purpose. Between two innocent-

looking planks of wood they placed a coiled rubber tube, with one end closed. Eusapia's chair and feet rested on the upper plank, the free end of the tube was connected with a manometer which recorded the pressure. At a later séance we are told that Eusapia showed impatience at finding herself seated on a balance, and in the course of the séance the rubber tube was forcibly stretched and broken. But before the tube was broken it had been repeatedly proved that when the table was "levitated" the balance indicated a corresponding increase in weight; a similar result followed on the levitation of the small stool. When the table tilted on the two legs nearest to Eusapia the balance again showed an increase of weight. When the two legs nearest to Eusapia rose in the air, and the table rested on the two further legs, a diminution of pressure was recorded. But let not the uncritical reader too hastily conclude that Eusapia herself lifted the table in the one case and pushed it in the other. The results are, no doubt, consistent with that supposition. But no one could have anticipated that the weight of the table would be annihilated; that would be a miracle indeed. It must appear somewhere. All that the records prove is that the new force emanates from and is dependent on Eusapia's organism (p. 441).

The Committee then turned their attention to Eusapia's person. They tested her memory, her reasoning powers, her keenness of sight, and her visual and auditory reactions generally; they measured her rate of respiration and tested her hyperæsthesia; they employed the dynamometer, the sphygmograph, the pneumograph, and Hallion and Comte's plethismo-

graphic tube ; they took her temperature ; they made uroscopic analyses ; they applied thermoscopes and galvanometers ; they made a chemical analysis of the air in the séance-room, and M. Curie took some trouble to draw off the air behind the curtain to see whether it was ionised. And after all these labours, the results of which are to be seen in many pages of curves and tables, they found that Eusapia is just like everybody else.

But if the Committee did not find what they sought, they did find something else. They tested Eusapia's alleged power of affecting the balance without touching it. At first a small machine, like a letter weigher, designed by M. Youriévitich, was employed. It was surrounded with a wooden frame, with linen or wooden panels to fit in the frame, so as to prevent the use of a hair or other fraudulent device. Eusapia tried it with the wooden covering and failed ; tried it with the linen covering and failed ; tried it with the frame alone and failed. All the protecting apparatus was then removed. Eusapia put her hands on either side of the scale and it went down, and the onlookers could not find out how it was done. Nothing daunted, M. Youriévitich then procured a more delicate balance (pèse-cocon) and surrounded it with a panelled glass lantern. M. Youriévitich further isolated the balance on a cake of wax, and put it in connection with a charged electroscope, so that if Eusapia touched the balance the fraud would be instantly detected. No result. All the glass panels were then removed except the one next Eusapia. Still no result. The last panel was then taken away, a handkerchief being placed over Eusapia's mouth to prevent her breath affecting



the sensitive balance. She stretched out her hands as before, and once more the scale moved; but the electroscope was not discharged. Twice more the same results followed. Then—in consequence of some suspicious movements observed by Madame Curie and another member of the Committee—the light was raised (our first intimation that the previous experiments took place in partial obscurity), and an arch of thick wire was placed in front of the balance. The balance moved no more, and Eusapia said she was tired.

Now, Madame Curie and her colleagues had suspected from the position of Eusapia's hands that she might have effected the movement by means of a fine thread, and, in fact, on experimenting afterwards, it was found that the scale could be depressed by means of a hair without discharging the electroscope. After this experience M. Youriévitich coated the scale with lamp-black, on which even the pressure of a hair would leave a mark—and the balance moved no more.

They then tried again with the other balance, replacing the metallic scale by a disc of paper in a wooden frame. If a pin were used, the paper would be pierced; if a hair, it would crackle. In fact, the balance moved once, when Eusapia's hands were held—but the paper crackled!

On another occasion Eusapia asked that her hands might be held, and in this position she placed her hands on either side of the leaf of an indiarubber plant, and the leaf was seen to move. Unfortunately for her she had forgotten her usual precaution; an isolated observer saw the hair between her hands (p. 521). She was detected on another occasion moving the balance by the same means.



The results with the balance being at best ambiguous, the Committee devised another test experiment ; this time with a manometer. A U-shaped tube filled with a coloured liquid was connected by one limb with the ordinary automatic apparatus for registering movements on a cylinder. The other limb communicated through a rubber tube with three small rubber bladders. On these bladders rested a small plate, so that any pressure exercised on the plate would depress the level of the fluid in the nearer limb of the tube and cause it to rise in the other. To prevent direct pressure the entire surface of the plate was covered with lamp-black. The experiment was conducted in a subdued light, and Eusapia procured a still deeper obscurity, by asking M. Youriévitich to place the curtain over herself and the apparatus. Eusapia then approached her hand to the plate. There followed slight oscillations in the liquid, the largest to the extent of about two-fifths of an inch. Eusapia then cried out that she had accidentally touched the plate. When examined in a good light the blackened surface was found to show slight marks, marks which M. Perrin imitated by touching the surface slightly with a nail (human). Some time later at the same meeting M. Courtier, seated by Eusapia's side at the table, saw a tiny nail (metallic), about a quarter of an inch long, fall on the table near Eusapia's left hand. It had not come from the ceiling, and it appeared probable that it came from Eusapia's person. This nail also, it was found, left traces on the blackened surface similar to those found there after the experiment. The Committee cautiously conclude : " L'expérience est restée pendante fort douteuse " (p. 523).

There are other "very doubtful" incidents—a strong smell of phosphorus in the cabinet indicating apparently a "spirit light" that failed; an occasion when during a strong upward pressure of the table M. de Fleurières, putting his hand down, found Eusapia's knee pressing against the lower rim of the table; prints in the clay placed in the cabinet of a hand strongly resembling Eusapia's, the hand covered with a stuff found under the microscope to resemble a fragment of stuff afterwards accidentally dropped by her, and so on.

Let us pass on to the verdict of the Committee. They conclude that the fraud which was apparently practised is readily explicable by the circumstances. Eusapia is growing old; she receives gifts, at any rate, if not always formal payment for the display of her powers. She would not wish to disappoint her clients. Hence a strong temptation to resort to fraud when the genuine power fails, as it probably does at times with her failing physical strength. There is a general opinion, they find, that Eusapia's phenomena are growing much less striking and abundant as the years go on. The opinion, perhaps, is scarcely justified. Eighteen years ago, at Milan, in a circle of scientific investigators, Eusapia gave a show certainly no better than her recent performances at the *Institut*. On the other hand, in quite recent years Maxwell, Venzano, Lombroso, and other go-as-you-please investigators have got all the phenomena they wanted.

The Committee hesitate, however, to conclude that fraud is the final explanation, because they have witnessed, under conditions which seemed to them such as to exclude fraud, movements of the table and stool and other phenomena which they could not explain.

They point out that the actual movements of the objects are substantiated by the automatic recording instruments above referred to ; there is no room, therefore, here for the hypothesis of collective hallucination, and they see no sufficient reason to adopt it as the explanation of the other phenomena—lights, the appearance of hands, &c.—in the case of which no automatic record was possible. They point out that the prevalent conception of matter aims at expressing it in terms of electric charges. If Eusapia does influence matter in some novel way, no doubt she influences it by affecting the ether, which is the vehicle of light and electricity, and, indeed, of all physical forces which we know, since gravity itself is, it would seem probable, ultimately explicable as a want of equilibrium between positive and negative electricity. Put in that way, Eusapia's presumed powers present no difficulty—it is but one marvel the more in a world which teems with marvels and electricity. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that the only proof Eusapia has yet given of her mastery over the electric forces is that on one or two occasions she has succeeded in discharging an electroscope, without anybody being able to find out how it was done.

The Report of the Committee of the *Institut* has certainly thrown fresh light on the problem of Eusapia and her performances. They have shown that the table is really moved—that so far, at any rate, the hypothesis of hallucination will not explain the phenomena ; they have shown, further, that the table is really moved by a force residing in Eusapia, and that this force conforms to the laws of the conservation of energy. They have shown that, apart from these dubious phenomena, Eusapia presents nothing excep-

tional in her relations to the physical world, the world in which electricity plays so large a part ; and they have added some further demonstrations of Eusapia's readiness to cheat when she can.

The great defect of their report is that whilst they cannot explain some of the things seen and done, they have not given us a chance of explaining them. They do not publish the shorthand notes of the séances. They tell us, to take an instance, that on such an occasion the table was raised with all four feet off the ground ; that the controller to the left was M. A., to the right M. B. We want to know what went before the movement ; how the hands and feet were held or otherwise controlled ; where the curtain was ; above all, the nature of the illumination. Without these and other details the report is worthless. We see that on this particular occasion the Committee believe that the control was adequate ; but then we know that it is Eusapia's art to induce this belief—and we know or suspect that in many previous cases the belief has been ill-founded. On the positive side this report does not advance the matter at all. Such a condensed description is of just so much value as the ordinary observer's account of a conjuring trick. It tells us only that the witnesses didn't see through the trick ; but it doesn't tell us how it was done.

## CHAPTER IV

### EUSAPIA PALLADINO AND THE S.P.R.

THE Society for Psychical Research last autumn appointed a Committee of three to inquire into the performances of Eusapia. Mr. Hereward Carrington is an amateur conjurer, who has for several years made a special study of the tricks of American mediums. His book, "The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism," is the standard authority on these fraudulent performances. The Hon. Everard Feilding and Mr. Baggally have also to their credit years of practical experience in the same field. Mr. Baggally, again, is a practical conjurer, and Mr. Feilding's humorous exposures of the tricks of British and foreign mediums are familiar to all members of the Society for Psychical Research.

On the ground of personal qualifications and practical experience a more competent Committee could, since the death of Dr. Hodgson, scarcely have been selected. Nor is it easy to indicate any point in which the conduct of the séances, the methods of control, or the means of recording fell short of the requirements. The Committee's Report is published as Part LIX. of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*.

The sittings, eleven in all, were held in November

and December, 1908, in a room tenanted by one of the Committee on the fifth floor of the Hotel Victoria at Naples. The room was prepared for the sittings by stretching across one corner a pair of black curtains, the triangular space so enclosed measuring 2 feet 8 inches from the angle of the walls to the middle of the curtains. Within the recess so curtained off were placed a small round table and several cheap musical instruments—bell, toy trumpet, tambourine, &c. In front of the curtains and with its longer sides at right angles to them was placed a plain wooden table, 2 feet 11 inches long by 1 foot 7 inches broad. During the séance Eusapia would sit at the narrow end of the table with her back to the curtains, the back of her chair being from a foot to eighteen inches distant from them. One of the investigators sat on either side,

“holding or held by her hand, with his foot under or on her foot, his leg generally pressing against the whole length of hers; often with his free hand across her knees, and very frequently with his two feet encircling her foot.”

Sometimes the hands and feet were tied, but generally the control by direct contact was preferred.

It is to be understood, of course, that in investigating phenomena of this kind depending, whatever view we may take of them, on obscure psychological and possibly physical conditions, the investigators impose their own conditions at their own risk. It is more profitable to follow the medium's lead, and to adapt the procedure accordingly. If the Committee had begun by putting the medium in an iron cage, they might have ended with nothing for their money.



In accordance with the principle above referred to, of following the medium's lead rather than insisting on imposing conditions on her, the Committee had provided several electric lights, lanterns, &c., of varying power. The lights were frequently changed by the Committee in the intervals between the séances in their endeavours to find a light which, whilst sufficient to enable the observers to see clearly, would not interfere with the progress of the phenomena. Moreover, the degree of illumination was repeatedly varied during the séance itself at the request of the medium or her spirit-control. It is not easy to arrive at a clear idea of the amount of light in every case. But it is stated that the strongest light allowed by the medium enabled the Committee to read "Baedeker" at the séance table; and the feeblest light was apparently sufficient, with one or two possible exceptions, to enable the observers on either side to see the outline of the medium's form.

A stenographer had been engaged who attended throughout the séances, his table being generally placed in the adjoining room, with the door open. When an incident occurred each sitter in turn dictated his account of it, and then each in turn stated the nature of the control exercised over Eusapia's hands and feet. The stenographer's notes would be written out on the following day, generally in presence of the Committee. Any remarks added after the sitting by any member of the Committee were put in parentheses and dated to distinguish them from the contemporaneous record.

Under these conditions the following phenomena were observed: movements and "levitations" of the table; movements, especially bulgings, of the medium's

dress ; extensive movements of the curtains ; movements of objects behind the curtains ; transportations of objects from behind the curtains ; touches and grasps, as of hands, on various parts of the sitters' persons ; raps and thumps ; small lights ; objects bearing some resemblance to hands and heads, appearing generally from behind the curtains, &c.

Such are the facts attested. And here, for the first time perhaps in the history of modern spiritualism, we seem to find the issue put fairly and squarely before us. It is difficult for any man who reads the Committee's report to dismiss the whole business as mere vulgar cheating. It is difficult, because, with one exception, which will be discussed later, we cannot point to anything which the investigators ought to have done which has been left undone. Given the necessity for leaving the medium free and unrestrained that the flow of manifestations might not be impeded, all precautions possible have been taken, and all restrictions possible have been imposed. The record, it need hardly be said, is unimpeachable ; it is at first hand from all the witnesses, and as nearly synchronous with the incidents as the time conditions will allow. The dilemma with which the Committee confronts us must, it would almost seem, be accepted as inevitable : either there was a display of some hitherto unrecognised force or the witnesses were hallucinated.

Let us consider the alternatives. Suppose we infer from these baffling occurrences the existence of a new force. It is not, *ex hypothesi*, a question of simple mechanical attraction and repulsion, capable of moving the table and other small objects to and fro ; our hypothetical force can already be so delicately con-

trolled and directed that it will carry articles of varying weight through the air and deposit them without shock on a spot selected—*e.g.*, a bell on the medium's head.

But the same—or is it another?—force can also make raps and bangs on the furniture, can cause luminous appearances, can create substantial bodies, mimicking on occasion human hands and heads; and these substantial phantoms are capable of purposive movements—the mimic hands can stroke and pinch and carry.

What manner of force is this that can produce such multifarious effects? and what are we to say of the ignorant peasant-woman who, untaught and unaided, has obtained so complete a mastery of the secrets of nature? If the new force is admitted, Mr. Feilding is surely justified in pointing out its significance for science and philosophy, perhaps even for theology:

“The force, if we are driven, as I am confident we are, to presuppose one other than mere conjuring, must either reside in the medium herself and be of the nature of an extension of human faculty beyond what is generally recognised; or must be a force having its origin in something apparently intelligent and external to her, operating either directly from itself or indirectly through or in conjunction with some special attribute of her organism. The phenomena, then—in themselves preposterous, futile, and lacking in any quality of the smallest ethical, religious, or spiritual value—are nevertheless symptomatic of something which, put at its lowest by choosing the first hypothesis, must, as it filters gradually into our common knowledge, most profoundly modify the whole of our philosophy of human faculty; but which, if that hypothesis is found insufficient, *may* ultimately be judged to require an interpretation involving not only that modification, but a still wider one, namely, our knowledge of the relations between mankind and an intelligent sphere external to it.”

But suppose, desiring to economise the marvellous, we reject that horn of the dilemma on which the Committee have chosen to impale themselves for a cheaper solution of the problem. What is the smallest draft on the unknown that we must be prepared to make on the assumption of collective hallucination? It will be observed by the attentive reader of the report that the feats described were not in themselves of a marvellous or even *recherché* kind. And again, things did not, as a rule, happen outside of a moderate radius—say, three feet—from Eusapia's person. In a word, if Eusapia could have freed an arm or even on occasion a leg, she could have done everything. Moreover, with the possible exception of the lights, which only appeared on one or two occasions, and may have been themselves hallucinatory—though this is unlikely—she could have done all that was done without extraneous apparatus of any kind, beyond, at most, a few black threads and her own handkerchief.

Now, it is clear that this hypothesis of collective hallucination is very much in the air; and, indeed, for reasons which will appear presently, it is only put forward provisionally. But it is, at any rate, in better case than the hypothesis of a new force. That rests on the sole foundation of sixty years of fraudulent mediumship, chequered by a few baffling and hitherto unexplained feats like those now under review. It has no analogy and no support from outside.

As regards the nature of the hallucination to be assumed, the Committee point out that the objects moved were found in their new position at the end of the sitting. In any case, we should not be justified in assuming that the movements of furniture, and the

things seen, heard, and felt, were other than objective. Indeed, the so-called heads, as the Committee themselves point out, bore on some occasions a suspicious resemblance to hands variously disguised, and there was no feature in any one of the reported apparitions pointing to an extraneous origin. On the hypothesis of hallucination, then, Eusapia herself moved the table, pinched the sitters, and put her hand behind the curtain or dressed it up in a handkerchief to simulate a phantom head. And she was able on the hypothesis to do these things because the hands of the witnesses who were supposed to control her limbs could not be trusted to report what they had felt, nor their eyes to report what they had seen. So far we find ourselves in agreement with the Committee. This, they argue, is the form which the hypothesis of hallucination would naturally assume for serious criticism.

But there is one point in their presentation of the case to which exception must be taken. On the hypothesis of hallucination, they say :

“ We should have to assume not only that each of us was subject to hallucinations both of touch and of what appeared to us perfectly clear vision, but that we were concurrently and concordantly hallucinated. When, for example, at 1.0 a.m. in Séance XI., B. reports that he is holding both the medium's thumbs in different hands, and F., from the farther end of the opposite side of the table, shortly afterwards spontaneously reports a change of B.'s control, and says that, visibly to him, B. is now holding both her thumbs in his right hand, we must assume, first, that B. was hallucinated when he reported that he held both her thumbs in separate hands ; and, secondly, that F. was hallucinated when he reported the change of the thumbs to B.'s right hand, and that both remained concordantly hallucinated during the continued touches on B.'s left hand by a hand within the curtain.”



It may be that on this particular occasion we have to assume "a concurrent and concordant" hallucination of the kind described; but it is worth pointing out that the foot control was not verified until the phenomenon had been proceeding for seven minutes, and that after attention had been once called to the foot there was an unproductive period of twelve minutes, enlivened by only one brief repetition of the phenomenon. Further, the curtain which had blown out over the table would have formed a convenient screen for the right foot. But in any case the incident is not typical. We may search far through the record before we find another instance as pertinent even as this one to the theory of collective hallucination. In nearly every case, perhaps in every case, a much simpler form of sense-deception would appear to be indicated.

Thus, to take an illustration from Séance V. (December 2, 1908), Mr. Baggally and Mr. Feilding sat at the right and left hand of the medium respectively. At 11.5 p.m. it is reported that the medium had backed her chair, so as almost to touch the small table, which had been placed at the beginning of the sitting, as usual, in the triangular recess behind the curtain. At 11.8 p.m. Mr. Baggally reports that the little table struck him under the shoulder and fell on the right of the medium. The light was Light IV. (a new 150-volt ruby glass lamp, enabling Mr. Carrington, who sat at the end of one side of the table remote from the medium, to see clearly the medium's face, and to distinguish eyes, ears, and nose, at a distance of about four feet). At 11.10 p.m. Mr. Baggally reports: "I am holding her right hand with my left hand, and her right foot is on my left foot, and I am feeling the whole length of her leg."



11.22 p.m. B.—The small table is moving.

F.—She squeezed my right hand at the time with her left hand, on her lap. Her left foot quite clearly on my right.

B.—Same control of foot as before.

B.—The small table rises and touches my elbow.

B.—I am perfectly certain that her whole right hand is on my left hand on the table, and I can feel the whole length of her leg.

B.—The small table is again moving ; same control.

F.—My right hand was on her two knees, and her left hand in mine and visible, and close to me ; legs both firmly between B.'s and mine, and I have felt their position with my hand.

11.25 p.m. The small table is rising again.

11.26 p.m. The small table is levitated right on to the séance table, through the curtains, between B. and medium. It rose to a height of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the floor, and is now resting on the séance table.

[The small table which had been in the cabinet was levitated from behind the right curtain, between it and the door (the door was to the extreme right of the medium, *i.e.*, behind B.), and came over the medium's right arm and my left arm, the legs resting on my arm and the medium's. It seemed to make successive efforts to get well on to the séance table. B., Dec. 3/08.]

B.—My control is perfect ; the same as before.

F.—Her left hand is right over this side of the table and visible. Her head close to me and visible. My right hand on both her knees as before.

Here, at any rate, the feat of moving the table would have presented small difficulty to a woman with any practice in such feats if, under cover of the obscurity, she could have got a hand or foot free.

It will be observed, however, that the movement was not a sudden one, but was accomplished in several stages, and occupied four minutes from start to finish. The difficulty would seem to lie in supposing that Messrs. Baggally and Feilding, expert observers, who were perfectly aware that Eusapia would release her hands and feet if she could, and were on the watch for precisely that form of trickery, could have been deceived, not once, but repeatedly, in their assertion as to the position of Eusapia's limbs. But it would not appear, on close scrutiny, that Mr. Feilding had really any say in the matter. It is not stated this time that both hands were visible. The reason is to be sought two or three pages back in the report. At 10.57 p.m. B. reports: "The curtain is blown over my head"; at 10.58 he reports: "The curtain is still over my hand."

At 11.10 it is explained that the curtain is still over B.'s arm.

As nothing more is said, we must assume that the curtain was over B.'s arm during the progress of the levitation, and that Eusapia's right hand was therefore invisible. Moreover, it will be seen from B.'s notes of the following day that the "force" which moved the table used the curtain as a shield.

The problem, then, in this particular case is simplified. We have to suppose that only Mr. Baggally's senses were deceived—indeed, as Eusapia's hand was presumably under the curtain, and her leg under the table, we are not justified in using the plural—we have to suppose merely an illusion of the sense of touch.

Dr. Hodgson's most valuable legacy to the world consists in his exhaustive analysis of the processes of

deception employed by the slate-writing medium, Eglinton—or, to put it more accurately, the processes of self-deception habitually set in motion by Eglinton's clients. Dr. Hodgson was assisted in his work by the late Mr. S. J. Davey, who set himself to learn Eglinton's tricks, and to reproduce them, with improvements, before unsuspecting sitters. The main secret of success, alike with Eglinton and with Davey, consisted in their ability, at the critical moment, to divert the sitter's attention in such a manner that he should himself be unaware of the momentary lapse. It is true that these earlier victims had not, for the most part, any special training in conjuring feats, and did not know exactly what tricks to expect ; and the question of hallucination or dissociation was not raised. The unrealised breaks in attention were in some cases very remarkable. A sitter who had brought to the séance slates completely wrapped in paper and tied up, in order to prevent their being tampered with, would sit by unsuspectingly, whilst Davey unfastened the slates, wrote upon the inner surface, and made them into a parcel again. Another, when told to concentrate his attention on a particular slate, on which writing was to be produced, would allow Davey to remove the slate from before his eyes and substitute another, and at the end of the sitting would be prepared to swear that he had never moved his gaze from the spot. It is permissible to suggest that in this curious skill exercised by Davey and Eglinton we find the first rudiments of the supreme art of which Eusapia, *ex hypothesi*, is an exponent. Moreover, as already shown, it is by the use of similar devices that Eusapia has admittedly performed many marvels in the past.

Let us put the hypothesis of simple sense-deception to the proof, and see how far it will explain the records.

The first three sittings, at which only Mr. Feilding and Mr. Carrington were present, exhibited little of interest—raps, levitations, movements of table, curtain, and small objects, and a few touches. The most important manifestation was the transportation of the small table from behind the curtain on to the séance table in Séance II. At her own request each of Eusapia's ankles had been tied to the nearest leg of her chair by means of a rope passed round her ankle and tied, then attached to the leg and rung of the chair, leaving her a play of about four inches. At 11.30 p.m., the electric light in the séance-room having been turned out some time previously, leaving the room to be illuminated solely by the light coming through the partly open door of the adjacent room in which the stenographer sat, the door was still further closed, and the light was now no longer sufficient for the stenographer to see the head of the sitters. C. was seated on the left and F. on the right.

11.30 p.m. C.—The left curtain has blown right out on to the table.

C.—My right hand was under the table firmly holding the medium's left hand.

F.—I have hold of her right hand continuously in her lap.

11.34 p.m. F.—*The medium kicks with her right foot violently on mine.*

C.—*She kicks me with her left foot also. Her left hand raises my right hand towards the curtain.*

Objects in the cabinet rattle on the table inside the curtain.

11.35 p.m. F.—*Medium asks me to put my left arm on her shoulder. Her right arm is round my neck.*

11.36 p.m. C.—*With her left hand medium is holding my right hand on the table.*

11.37 p.m. The objects in the cabinet have fallen over on the table inside it.

C.—*She grasped my right hand firmly in her left hand at the time this was going on, and pressed on my right foot with her left.*

F.—I was holding her right hand on the table with my left, and the tips of both her feet under the table with my right hand.

C.—My left hand was holding her head and I was holding her left hand in my right.

11.42 p.m. The small table in the cabinet has been lifted up on to the séance table, behind the curtain, several objects remaining upon the top.

F.—I could see that her head was motionless.

C.—My right hand was held in her left hand on the séance table. Her left foot was on my right.

F.—Her right hand was in my left hand. *I was holding both her toes in my right hand.*

C.—The small table from the cabinet is pushing against me with considerable force, the objects being still on it.

[The table was pushed out on to the séance table at an angle of about 45 degrees, still covered by the left-hand curtain, which thus prevented the objects from falling off. The four feet of the table were about two feet from the ground, and the table remained in this position for at least one minute, pressing strongly against my hand which had been raised from the table still holding the medium's, and apparently making efforts to climb on to the séance table. C., Nov. 24/08.] [After which it fell back to the ground. F., Feb. 6/09.]

C.—My right arm is under the curtain, my hand being held by the medium's left hand. The curtain

has remained on the séance table, covering our two arms, with several small objects inside, these having fallen off the top of the small table.

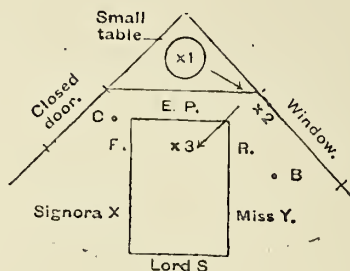
The light, it will be seen, had been expressly lowered for this performance. There is no difficulty in supposing that Eusapia knew how to free herself from the leg fastenings which had been put on at her own request. Any conjurer could do as much. The precise moment of freedom was probably marked by the violent kicks recorded and the simultaneous movement of the left arm. She then leaned her body to the right, no doubt to give herself the necessary purchase for moving the table with her left foot. Later, she appears to have inclined her head to the left. Five minutes later the little table was lifted up. Her head is now apparently not inclined to either side. The whole of these movements are consistent with the supposition that Eusapia freed her left leg and used it to move the table, the left curtain being employed at once to conceal the movement and to assist in preserving the balance of the suspended table. The chief objection to this hypothesis is that Mr. Feilding claimed to be holding the tips of both feet—perhaps one shoe was empty.

The incident last quoted cannot therefore be held as a good test case. The doubts of the committee, indeed, were not dispelled until a later séance. Let us consider another case of transportation—the most striking manifestation of the kind in the whole series, in which it would seem clear that the result could not be explained by the use of the foot alone.

At Séance VIII., held on December 10th, some visitors were invited to attend. One of them, Mr.



Ryan, was for a great part of the sitting in control of the left hand and foot. The diagram below represents the arrangement of the sitters at the time of the phenomenon now to be described.



Mr. Feilding, it will be seen, was in control of the right side, and Mr. Carrington was standing behind him. The light during the progress of the manifestation was Light III., which is described (p. 465) as " = 110 volts, 10 candles, ruby, shaded with one thickness of thin tissue cream-coloured paper, and one thickness of a white silk handkerchief hung over it, so that the whole handkerchief is illumined with a red glow."

12.22 a.m. B.—A white thing appeared between the curtains over her head.

R.—I saw nothing.

F.—I saw it.

F.—Her right hand holding mine on the edge of the table. I am sure it is the whole of it, I am feeling her thumb.

R.—Something lifts the clay and puts it on the table.

F.—The medium blew three or four times while it happened. The clay came gently out from the side of the curtain near the window, between the medium and R., over

her left shoulder, on to the table and on to the top of her right hand and mine.

R.—The block of clay passed my eye, coming from over my shoulder, and slid down my right arm and passed over to the opposite side of the table.

R.—My *right hand was lying perfectly flat on the middle* of the table, and *her left hand was stroking my wrist*; her left foot between my two feet.

F.—Her right hand was continuously in mine. My left hand on her head.

The following are the notes upon the incident made later by Mr. Carrington and Mr. Feilding :

I was in an exceptionally good position, standing behind F., for seeing one of the phenomena, viz., the transportation of the clay from the cabinet to the séance table, shortly after 12.22 a.m., and, as I happened to be closely watching the curtain at the time, I saw the movements of the board and clay very clearly. The clay appeared first at the opening on the extreme left, next to the white window curtains, and at a distance of at least three feet from the medium's chair. It must have been moved to that point, 2, from its former position on the small table in the cabinet, 1. [It was transported from 2 to the right shoulder of R. H. C., June 30/09] and then slid gently down on to the table, until it rested at the point 3. I saw a white, opaque substance, about two inches broad and six inches long, apparently carrying this clay, which came across the medium's left arm, her left hand being on R.'s right. The movement of the clay was peculiar. It travelled slowly as though carried through the air, and was most certainly not *thrown*. It would have been an utter impossibility for the medium to have placed the clay in the position in which I first saw it, 2 (even supposing that she had her left hand free), and then to have moved it on to the séance table. Had she done so, the left-hand curtain, behind which her left arm must have been thrust, would have been crumpled together and carried forward some considerable distance over her arm. Such, however, was not the case. I clearly saw that the left-hand curtain did not move, and

I am consequently quite sure that her left arm and hand did not and could not have transported the clay from the left opening of the cabinet curtain to the séance table.

H. C., Dec. 15, 1908.

I find I wrote no contemporary note to this séance. My recollection is, however, perfectly clear as to the transportation of the clay. Eusapia's two hands were both visible, her left on R.'s right near the middle of the table, her right hand under my right about a foot distant from her left. I did not see the board on which was the clay till it arrived on R.'s right shoulder, nor did I notice the white opaque substance referred to by C. I saw the board and clay, however, slide slowly down R.'s right arm, alight on the table by his hand, move across the table and come on to the top of my own right hand near my side of the table. I am absolutely certain that neither of Eusapia's hands carried them.

E. F., April 14, 1909.

Mr. Carrington's note, it will be seen, was not made until five days after the incident. Mr. Feilding's statement, made four months later, that he saw Eusapia's left hand resting on R.'s right in the middle of the table, could in any case be worthy of little credence. Moreover, it is in conflict with R.'s contemporary statement that the medium's left hand was stroking his wrist. How long had the hand been stroking his wrist? Was the stroking going on all the time? And how does he know that it was a hand, and a left hand, all the time? *He* doesn't say that he saw the medium's hand, nor does Mr. Carrington, writing five days later. That clear vision seems only to have been vouchsafed to Mr. Feilding, and he didn't think it worth mentioning until four months afterwards.<sup>1</sup> There is nothing in the contemporary statements to forbid the supposi-

<sup>1</sup> In his article in *McClure's Magazine*, reprinted in the *Journal of the American S.P.R.*, Mr. Carrington, in a

tion that whilst Eusapia's right hand was held by F., who was feeling the thumb "on the edge of the table," she employed a finger or two of the same hand to stroke R.'s wrist, being unable to reach his hand, which was flat on the table, and thus had the left hand free to move the clay.

But criticism of isolated manifestation is unprofitable. This particular feat has indeed been selected for consideration because the Committee themselves directed attention to it in their Summary (p. 336). Let us take a broader view, and consider the séances as a whole. Broadly speaking, the manifestations fall into two classes. In the one may be placed levitations of table, movements of objects within and without the cabinet, bulging of dress or curtain, grasps of invisible hands. Now, all these things could be done if Eusapia had the free use of a foot, sometimes even of a knee, her head, or some other part of her person. It is impossible in the given conditions—conditions of Eusapia's own choosing—effectively to check the controller's statements that such freedom was not permitted. But the rarer and what may be called the "higher" phenomena—transportation of objects from the cabinet to the top of the table, lights, the appearance of visible hands and heads—would re-

similar fashion, amplifies at a later date the contemporary notes. In relating that he felt his arm gripped by a hand, he says in the magazine article: "I was holding both of Eusapia's hands in mine. . . . Her feet, knees, and head were also visible." But from the shorthand notes (Report, p. 518) it appears that one of Eusapia's hands was under the curtain, and nothing is said about the feet and knees being visible. Perhaps Mr. Carrington means that he would have seen them if he had looked under the table.

quire in most cases the use of a hand, and it is not only easier to control the hands, but easier to check the controller's statements that the hands were effectively controlled. If, as seems occasionally to have happened, a foot is used in these feats, extensive movements of Eusapia's body will be observed.

At the first three séances Mr. Carrington and Mr. Feilding were in sole control.

During these three séances the only "higher" phenomena were the transportation of the table in Séance II., already described, and the appearance of a black head emerging from the curtain [(p. 370)]. This solitary apparition was seen at a moment when Mr. Feilding had released the medium's right hand and was kneeling down to cut the rope by which her feet were confined.

At Séance IV. two strangers, Professor Bottazzi and Professor Galeotti, were in control for part of the time. During the period of their control two white things shot out from the cabinet (p. 408). After Mr. Feilding resumed control the white things appeared no more.

Séances V., VI., VII.—Mr. Baggally, who had now come over from England, was in control of Eusapia's right hand throughout these three séances, except for two brief and unproductive<sup>1</sup> periods at the beginning of Séances V. and VII., during which Mr. Carrington controlled. Mr. Carrington was on each occasion displaced by direction of the medium to make room for Mr. Baggally.

During these three séances the "higher phenomena" were abundant.

<sup>1</sup> Unproductive, that is, of "higher" phenomena.



Séance VIII.—Mr. Ryan in control of the left side. Higher phenomena abundant.

Séance IX.—Mr. Carrington in control of right, Mr. Baggally left. No higher phenomena.

Séance X.—A<sup>1</sup> failure.

Séance XI.—A<sup>1</sup> visitor, Mrs. Hutton, continuously in control of left hand. Higher phenomena abundant.

There were, therefore, only five completely representative séances. We should not be surprised to find that at two of these, VIII. and XI., the most striking phenomena—appearance of heads, hands, transportation of objects from cabinet—took place on the side controlled by the stranger, on these two occasions the left side. But a similar preference for one side is at least equally conspicuous in the three remaining séances, V., VI., VII., the side preferred being the right side, which was controlled by Mr. Baggally.

We find that the whole of the higher phenomena at these three séances, V., VI., VII., occurred within reach of the limbs controlled by Mr. Baggally, and could be explained on the assumption that Mr. Baggally was mistaken in supposing that at the time of the particular feat he was in actual contact with the right hand and right foot of the medium. The actual limb used—at any rate, for the special feats under consideration—at these three séances was, it would seem probable in most cases, the right hand. There are the following grounds for thinking that Mr. Baggally may have been mistaken in his conviction :

1. Throughout these three séances Eusapia's right hand, with few exceptions, is reported as resting on or under Mr. Baggally's left hand, whereas Eusapia's left hand is generally reported as lying in or being



held by the hand of the other controller, Mr. Feilding or Mr. Carrington.

2. On many occasions in these three séances it is reported that the right-hand curtain has blown over Mr. Baggally so as to cover his arm and hand, or, again, it is reported that he is holding the hand of the medium through the curtain or under the curtain. It is clear that in the hands of a practised conjurer—and such we must assume Eusapia to be—the use of a curtain would considerably facilitate the freeing of a hand; *e.g.*, when the controller's hand had been to some extent numbed by continuous pressure, the folds of the curtain might be made, for a time, to do duty for a hand detached for special service. It is surely extremely significant that during these three séances neither of Mr. Baggally's colleagues was on any single occasion embarrassed in this manner. This use of the curtain was reserved for Mr. Baggally.

3. The medium is reported as occasionally releasing one hand momentarily and replacing it. This manœuvre is not exclusively reserved for the hand held by B. In Séance V., for instance, on at least two occasions she released herself from F.'s grasp [(see 10.44½ and 11.37 p.m.). But no results of importance followed on these occasions. In the case of B., however, the manœuvre is employed to some purpose (see VI., 12.4, 12.30; VII., 10.59 p.m.). On each of these occasions, after control is resumed, it is found that both of Eusapia's hands are on her knees, the right hand *lying on* Mr. Baggally's, the left hand held by the other controller. Now, these are precisely Eusapia's usual preliminaries to substitution of hands. She is known to practise this trick

whenever circumstances allow it. Several instances were detected during the course of these séances (twice in Séance III., and again in X., 12.11; XI., 10.30). There is nothing in the contemporary report of Mr. Baggally's utterances to forbid the supposition that the device was successfully employed by Eusapia on these three occasions. On none of these occasions does he make mention of the thumb, or show any signs of being alive to the danger of substitution, and on each of the three occasions the release of the hand was followed shortly by the appearance from behind the curtains of a "head" or nondescript object. Again, at Séance VI., 11.40, the release of the right hand is followed, as usual, by the appearance from between the curtains of a nondescript object, but the right hand this time is found on the table *under the curtain*.

But the special applicability of these remarks will be made plainer by an actual extract from the record.

I will begin with an incident which Mr. Baggally has specially challenged me to explain.<sup>1</sup>

Séance V., 11.38.—B. controls on right, F. on left. C., standing beside F., leans over table and feels a hand under the curtain about two feet above medium's head. What is this hand? and how did it come there?

Let us see what had preceded its appearance.

At 11.30 C. had reported: "The curtain" (which curtain is not specified) "is blown right out against me as I am leaning over the table."

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, February, 1910. I have chosen this incident because it is the first on the list; but all the other cases cited by Mr. Baggally seem to me explicable by similar methods.

At 11.36 F. reported: "She is leaning back in my arms, my right hand on her two knees and her left hand on the corner of the table."

B.—"Her right hand on my left hand on the table. She swings her right foot backwards and forwards continuously, and I follow it with my left foot."

At 11.37 F. reports: "I have hold of her left hand again."

B. makes no report.

Immediately after the touch at 11.38 F. reports: "Her head is lying on my shoulder, her left hand continues in mine."

B. makes no report.

C. reports another push.

F. again reports his control. B. makes no report.

C. reports a third push. B. then, and not till then, reports that her right foot is still swinging backwards and forwards followed by his foot.

I take it that the three pushes were caused by Eusapia's right foot, lifted up under cover of the curtain and of B.'s prolonged lapse of attention, and that Eusapia's curious position in F.'s arms was designed to give her the necessary fulcrum for the movement. A similar attitude, as we have just seen, was reported in connection with the transportation of the small table in Séance II.

Now let us turn to the last part of Séance VII., the third of three consecutive successful séances in which, as will be seen from the summary prefixed by the Committee to their report, the phenomena seem to have reached a maximum of intensity and frequency.

Séance VII.—At 10.54 p.m. the medium asks to be allowed to touch the curtain, presumably with the hand,

but which hand is not stated. Three minutes later, at 10.57 p.m., a white thing comes out from between the curtains.

F. reports that he is holding left hand, feeling thumb. B. feels the fingers of the right hand resting on his. Both hands are in the medium's lap.

10.58 another white thing appears. F.'s control as before. B. reports: "Her right hand on my left hand, both on my knee."

At 10.59 medium momentarily releases her right hand from B.'s control. Within the next few minutes there follow several thumps on the table, a partial levitation, a black thing shoots about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet towards B.'s head; the table in the cabinet is shaken.

F. reports that throughout these phenomena he is holding the medium's left hand in his right on her lap; B., first, that the medium's right hand rests *on* his left hand on her right knee; next, that he holds the right hand *in* his left hand on her lap; lastly, that her right hand is *on* his left hand on her knee.<sup>1</sup>

At 11.17 p.m. F. is touched on his left hand, which is on the back of the medium's neck.

Both Eusapia's hands are now reported to be on the table; but B. reports: "She has her right hand in my left resting on the table, under the curtain."

11.20 p.m. C.—A bell from the cabinet is lifted from the small table in the cabinet, through the curtain, and put upon the medium's head and remains there.

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<sup>1</sup> B.'s statement is not very clear. At 10.58 he had reported, "Her right hand on my left hand, both on *my* knee." At 10.59 he reports that the hand has been momentarily released, and adds, "Both hands are now again on *her* right knee." If he is correctly reported, Eusapia has effected an important change in position without the controller realising that any change has occurred.

F.—I heard the bell, which had been on the table in the cabinet, begin to ring, and then it suddenly appeared outside the curtain and came over the medium's head, and it hung there and went on ringing. She told me it was tied to her head. I felt with my fingers, and felt something like muslin tying it to her hair. As I was looking at it I suddenly saw a white thing, which I thought was the medium's right hand, come to untie the bell, ring it hard, and throw it on to the séance table. This was within one foot of my nose. I could see the medium's face perfectly.

B.—I saw the bell come out and lie on the medium's head, and also saw it thrown from her head on to the table.

C.—I saw the hand coming to untie the bell, and heard the bell ringing above her head; also saw the hand throw it out on the table.

[I also saw this hand distinctly lift, ring, and throw the bell, but thought it was F. or medium's hand. M. (the stenographer), Dec. 8/08.]

[B.—I did not see the hand. Dec. 8/08.]

F.—Her left hand was visibly in my right all the time on the table.

B.—During the whole of this phenomenon her right hand was resting on my left hand on the table and her right foot on my left foot.

F.—I had got the whole of her left hand on the table visibly in my right on my corner of the table, so that it is perfectly clear that there cannot be any question of substitution.

B. does not say whether the hand he held, or believed himself to hold, was still enveloped in the curtain. That it was so may perhaps be inferred from the fact that F. mentioned that Eusapia's left hand was visible on the table, but does not say the same of Eusapia's right hand. Nevertheless, as we learn from the notes written the next day, the light at the time was sufficiently good for the stenographer, distant six feet from the medium, to see the hand which was busied with the bell on the medium's head.

At 11.26, 11.30, 11.32, and 11.36 a white object is reported issuing from the curtains. At 11.36 a brilliant light is seen by F. and the stenographer. B.'s reports are : At 11.30, "control of foot and hand exactly the same as before." At 11.32, "My control also quite complete. I confirm with my hand that her foot is really on mine."

11.37 p.m. F.—Now another light has come out, this time on the medium's lap.

F.—Her left hand is on the table in mine.

*[It will be observed that B.'s control is not stated.]*

[I asked if the lights might be shown to the others, who had not yet seen them owing to the position of the curtain. F., Dec. 8/08.]

11.42 p.m. Five tilts of the séance table, apparently without contact, ask for less light.

F.—My hand on her lap with hers.

B.—My hand on hers ; control of feet also the same.

11.45 p.m.

*Light IV.*

B.—Both C. and I saw a brilliant light inside the cabinet about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet from medium, inside the right-hand curtain.

B.—Her right hand was on my left hand, but she had lifted her foot and placed it on the bar of her chair. I have verified this fact with my hand.

F.—Her hand in mine on this side of the table, and her left foot was on mine.

It will be observed that B. does not state whether Eusapia's hand is on the table or in her lap, nor whether it is still under the curtain.

11.54 p.m. Something touches B.'s jacket ; again something presses through the curtain against B.'s face. F. holds Eusapia's hand in her lap. B. reports : " My



control as before, except that she has now taken her right foot from the chair and is now pressing my left foot with it." 11.58 to 12.1. B. again feels a touch and a pressure through the curtain, and hears a sound like the clicking of nails.

12.1. F. reports control the same.

B.—“The control the same as before of both hands and feet. Her right hand on the table during the last phenomena”—from which it may no doubt be inferred that her right hand had previously been in her lap—an important fact which B. had not stated.

12.5½ a.m. F.—I saw a thing exactly like the head of a ninepin or a small wooden head. It stayed out about three seconds.

B.—I saw this object come out too.

[It came from the farthest side of the right curtain, past B.'s head, rather slowly, towards F., above the level of our heads, and then went back again. B. and F., Dec. 8/08.]

F.—It is certainly not the medium's left hand, which is motionless on this corner of the table.

B.—And it is certainly not the right hand, because I had control of it all the time. My foot control is the same.

12.9 a.m. B.—I saw a hand distinctly come out of the (extreme right of the) curtain; it grasped my left shoulder, and I felt its thumb and four fingers. My control is the same as before.

C.—I saw the white hand, which seemed to me to remain out about three seconds.

F.—I was complaining to the medium that the head which came out was not large enough to be a man's head. She said that she had not seen it. While we were talking it came out again. This time it appeared to me to be larger, and it waggled about for quite a time between B. and me.

F.—I had her left hand absolutely in my left hand, and her left foot on my right foot, and my right hand across both knees.

B.—My control is the same as before.

Again, B. does not tell us the nature of his control, nor the position of Eusapia's right hand.

The above extracts give a fair sample of the phenomena and of the control. They have not been selected with a view to placing the case in an unfavourable light. It is true that the lapses of attention and defects of control appear to have culminated in this séance. But so did the phenomena.

Thus the case stands. The Committee are certainly not inferior in general capacity to any previous investigators, and their practical experience is probably unrivalled. The record is as nearly as possible perfect. No other record of the physical phenomena of spiritualism, it may be said, is of any value beside it. And yet the record, as we have seen, is at critical moments incomplete, and at almost every point leaves obvious loopholes for trickery. So far from being required to assume the concurrent and concordant hallucination of sight and touch in two independent observers, the events of the three most important séances can be readily explained if we assume, what the record itself seems to indicate, that a single person was hallucinated—if the Committee prefer the word—and a single sense, the sense of touch. We cannot blame the individual members of the Committee. Rather we must recognise that the task which they set themselves to perform is probably beyond human powers. In no other field of human activity is the strained and unremitting exercise of every sense faculty for several consecutive hours demanded by the circumstances. Where these three gentlemen have failed, we others would, no doubt, fail more conspicuously and more disastrously.

There is one way, and only one way, in which the operation of a new force in this dubious region can be substantiated to the satisfaction of sober-minded men. When Sir W. Crookes was about to undertake a similar investigation he indicated the principles which should guide scientific research in this field.

“The spiritualist tells of flowers with the fresh dew on them, of fruit, and living objects being carried through closed windows and even solid brick walls. The scientific investigator naturally asks that an additional weight (if it be only the thousandth part of a grain) be deposited on one pan of his balance when the case is locked. And the chemist asks for the thousandth of a grain of arsenic to be carried through the sides of a glass tube in which pure water is hermetically sealed.”<sup>1</sup>

Only by such means—only, that is, by the production of effects which are not merely measured and recorded by instruments of precision, but which dispense at all points with the necessity for supervision by fallible human senses—can the reality of the hypothetical new force be established. More than a generation has passed since Sir W. Crookes wrote the words above quoted, but the desired proof is not forthcoming. No doubt he has tried to procure evidence of the kind required. We know that Zöllner tried—and failed. We know that every attempt hitherto made to obtain such an automatically guaranteed record has failed. Attempts have actually been made, as we have seen, to obtain such evidence in the case of Eusapia, but they, too, have failed.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the conviction of Messrs. Baggally, Carrington, and Feilding that their senses were not deceived is quite irrelevant

<sup>1</sup> “Researches in Spiritualism,” by Sir William Crookes, F.R.S. London, 1874.

to the issue. If a man knows that he is deceived, the deception is *ipso facto* incomplete. In any case the matter is not to be decided by argument, but by experiment. Let renewed and again renewed attempts be made to procure physical effects under automatic check, and automatically recorded, and until success has been obtained, let us leave Eusapia in a decent obscurity. The mere fact that throughout its existence of more than sixty years modern spiritualism has no single piece of evidence of the kind to offer is in itself of extreme significance. If test experiments of the kind indicated have not been frequently tried—as we know they have been tried occasionally—so much the worse for the qualifications of the investigators. If they have been repeatedly tried, and have failed, so much the worse for the phenomena.

Since the above chapter was completed news of an interesting exposure of Eusapia's methods comes from America. At a sitting held on December 18th a young man under cover of the darkness crept half into the cabinet behind Eusapia. It was too dark to see anything, but, warned by a slight movement of the small table (preparatory, no doubt, to its transportation), he put out his hand and grasped a human foot, unshod, by the instep. Eusapia at the same moment screamed out that her foot had been touched. The interesting point about the incident is that Professor Münsterberg, the well-known psychologist, was controlling on the left side—it was a left foot that was seized—and continuously felt the pressure of her left foot, as he supposed, on his. What he felt was, no doubt, the empty shoe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Münsterberg's article in the *Metropolitan Magazine*, February, 1910, and *Journal S.P.R.*, April, 1910.

At subsequent séances she was watched from a concealed window in the cabinet, or an observer was secreted in a bureau provided with a peephole. Expert observers, like Mr. W. S. Davis, of New York, were able while seated at her side to satisfy themselves that substitution of hand and foot was habitually practised. But the most complete demonstration of her methods was obtained at some séances held in April last at the house of Professor Lord, of Columbia University. Whilst Eusapia's attention was momentarily diverted two extra sitters were introduced, who placed themselves flat on the floor, with their eyes only a few inches from Eusapia's feet. These observers were able to prove that at this particular séance the whole of the movements of the table, the bulging of the curtain, and the movements of objects in the cabinet were produced by Eusapia's free foot. She was enabled to free a foot because owing to the narrowness of the table the feet of the controllers were necessarily very close together, and it was an easy matter for Eusapia to make one foot do duty for two. The whole process of gradual substitution was seen by the concealed observers.<sup>1</sup>

The result of these American observations is to confirm the view taken in the foregoing pages, that the whole of Eusapia's performances can be explained by the time-honoured device of substitution of foot or hand.

But it does not appear that Mr. Carrington's faith in Eusapia's supernormal powers is seriously shaken. How should it be?

<sup>1</sup> See article in *Collier's Weekly* (N.Y.), May 14, 1910; and the *New York Times*, May 12th and subsequent dates.



## BOOK II

### I

#### THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

THE problem considered in the preceding book was a comparatively simple one. Either the phenomena described were mere conjuring tricks, eked out by misrepresentation and illusion, or they are a proof of some supernormal agency. There is no middle course. That on the former alternative the authors of the conjuring tricks were not wholly responsible for the fraud involved is a conceivable hypothesis. But it is one with which, in this particular field, we are not directly concerned, since it can have no bearing upon the nature of the phenomena.

But in the region which we are now about to enter the problems presented to us are much more complex ; so complex, indeed, that there seems little likelihood of a final solution being attained in this generation. And the question of fraud, apart altogether from ethical considerations, assumes considerable importance. I should, perhaps, state at the outset, as emphatically as possible, that it seems to me incredible that fraud should be the sole explanation of the revelations made in trance and automatic writing. No one who has made a careful study of the records, and



is sufficiently free from prepossession to enable him to form an honest opinion, will believe that any, imaginable exercise of fraudulent ingenuity, supplemented by whatever opportuneness of coincidence and laxness on the part of the investigators, could conceivably explain the whole of these communications. And the more intimately they are studied the more the conviction grows that we must assume supernormal agency of one kind or another. In what follows, then, I shall take it for granted that fraud is not the complete explanation.

But that fraud—or what would in ordinary circumstances be called fraud—plays some part in the results I do not doubt. The word is not happily chosen; play-acting or make-believe would more nearly express, in typical cases, the meaning to be conveyed. But the nature of the problem will become clearer as the discussion proceeds.

To understand the full significance of anything we must trace it to its roots; we must make ourselves acquainted with its history. The most conspicuous example in modern times of trance revelations is to be found in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. But Swedenborg's seership was an isolated phenomenon. He had no immediate successors. For practical purposes trance speaking and trance writing are co-eval with mesmerism and the induced trance. Towards the end of the eighteenth century in the records of the Societies of Harmony, which were founded in France to carry on the work of Mesmer, we find accounts of mediums who spoke in the trance words which were recognised by the bystanders as proceeding from an intelligence not that of the

speaker. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century trance speakers of this kind were common in Germany. The physicians—enthusiastic magnetists—who observed them believed that their entranced patients were possessed or inspired by spirits, and in that conviction cherished all their utterances with scrupulous care. There is no reason to suppose that there was any pretence about the trance, or about the impersonation of spirit controls, the descriptions of journeys to the moon, the planets, or heaven itself. All that is now part of the recognised phantasy of the dream consciousness.

But in some of the best-known cases the trance utterances were accompanied by what passed for telepathic or clairvoyant visions, and in one noted case, the famous Seeress of Prevorst, by various physical phenomena. I have tried in vain to find in the records of these German somnambules any telepathic or clairvoyant incidents resting on fairly good evidence. They may have been genuine, but it is suspicious that the accidents and other happenings seen by the clairvoyants in the trance mostly concerned members of their own families. The physical phenomena in the case of the Seeress of Prevorst—throwing of gravel and occasionally candlesticks and boots—must, in accordance with the presumption already referred to, be taken as *primâ facie* evidence of fraud.

But a trance medium is, *ex hypothesi*, in an abnormal condition; and there are other indications that the dissociation of consciousness frequently involves impaired moral control. In using the word "fraud," therefore, in this connection we do not necessarily imply a higher degree of moral responsibility

than when we pass judgment on the play-acting of a child. Conjuring tricks and sham telepathy seem to be merely part of the automatic romance.<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to recognise the probability of such an explanation in the case of Frau Hauffe and other German somnambules—sickly neurotics whose psychical instability was accompanied by, or perhaps rather based upon, serious physical deficiencies and anomalies. It is more difficult to apply the same measure to the case of a highly educated and apparently normal and healthy Englishman. Stainton Moses was a graduate of Oxford, for some years a clergyman of the Church of England, and English Master in University College School. In the prime of his life he developed into a spirit medium of the most advanced kind. He wrote “inspirational” discourses and books, and delivered messages purporting to come from the dead. Most of his clairvoyant revelations can be shown to be reproductions of recent obituary notices in the newspapers and other published material. The few instances which have not yet been traced to such readily accessible sources cannot be certainly relied upon as indicating supernormal faculty.<sup>2</sup> But Stainton Moses was also a physical medium. In his presence brass candlesticks, Parian statuettes, flowers, and seed pearls were brought into the darkened séance-room; delicious scents oozed from the medium’s head; pencils wrote of themselves; spirit lights floated around; the strains of exquisite spirit music would be

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of the psychology of mediumship see M. Flournoy’s “Des Indes à la Planète Mars.”

<sup>2</sup> See an analysis, by the writer, of these trance revelations in “Studies in Psychical Research,” pp. 125—33.

heard; sometimes the medium would be levitated in the darkness.

Stainton Moses worked under conditions entirely favourable to trickery, in complete darkness, unbound, without tests or precautions of any kind, and in the midst of a circle of confiding friends—and the phenomena were generally reported by himself. We should laugh at such “evidence” in the case of a professional medium. If it is still thought by some persons worthy of consideration in the case of Stainton Moses, it is because of the difficulty of reconciling the elaborate and systematic trickery involved with the character of an English gentleman, for some time a clergyman of the Established Church.

The question resolves itself into the weighing of two improbabilities. But until Eusapia, or some other, has moved the smoke-blackened balance, or depressed the covered manometer, we must assume that the candlesticks and the spirit lights were brought into the séance-room in Moses’ pockets, and that the reported levitations were due to cunning suggestion acting in a dark room on a trustful audience. Let it be noted, however, that Stainton Moses’ life was given up to the propaganda of a new faith: and if our view of his physical phenomena is correct, he enforced the lesson of inspirational sermons by means of parlour conjuring tricks parading as miracles. The thing in a sane man is incredible. On either hypothesis we have to assume abnormality. Either Stainton Moses was gifted with abnormal powers as a physical medium, or he presented some extraordinary psychological abnormality which could reconcile inspired sermons and parlour conjuring tricks.

The case of Stainton Moses may throw some light on, and in turn be illuminated by, the case of another clergyman, who appears to have excited the admiration of his friends by many feats of pseudo-clairvoyance.

The Rev. C. B. Sanders was a Presbyterian minister living in Alabama. He was born in 1831, the seventh child of his parents. From 1854 to 1876 he was subject to severe nervous attacks, attended with considerable pain and the apparent opening of the main sutures in the skull. [(This phenomenon, though described by several lay witnesses, is not attested by his medical attendant, who gives otherwise a full description of the case.)] During these attacks a secondary personality, accompanied by a complete change of consciousness, developed itself. This secondary personality assumed the title of  $X + Y = Z$ . The thoughts and doings of  $X + Y = Z$  were hidden from the waking Mr. Sanders, whilst  $X + Y = Z$  had complete knowledge of his primary personality.  $X + Y = Z$  soon showed himself gifted with remarkable powers. Some of his feats—*e.g.*, shooting ducks at night, which were invisible to his companions—could probably be explained by hyper-æsthesia of vision; others—the habitual writing of letters and sermons with his hand and the paper entirely concealed by the bedclothes—appear to point to a special exaltation of the muscular sense. But  $X + Y = Z$  also gave numerous demonstrations of what appears to have been genuine telepathy. On several occasions he told of a death or an accident occurring in the circle of his acquaintance hours or days before the news reached the town where he lived.



Two or three cases, out of many, are cited by Mr. Myers ("Human Personality," Vol. II., pp. 566-9). The witnesses to these events are beyond suspicion, the evidence is clearly given, and from the nature of some of the cases it seems improbable that there could have been any mistake or misrepresentation. Moreover, the published instances, themselves selected, as we are told, out of much larger numbers, are fairly numerous. It seems difficult to question that Mr. Sanders, in his secondary state, was gifted not only with remarkable extensions of the ordinary sensory faculties, but also with the new mode of perception which has been named telepathy. But there are some marvellous occurrences recorded which cannot be explained either by telepathy or by any extension of the known senses. They are concerned with the finding of money, or jewellery. There are twelve cases of the kind recorded in the book.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, on one occasion Mr. Sanders was driving in a carriage with two ladies. He went into a trance and got out of the carriage, attended by one of the ladies, who writes :

"He got out with his eyes still closed, for I watched this closely, and, counting aloud sixteen steps, stooped down, caught hold of the hook of a rather heavy gold watch-chain, and drew it out of the sand, which fell from the chain as he drew it up. My eye followed his hand as it stooped, and there was nothing visible to me till he drew the chain out of the sand" (p. 97).

Three other instances occurred in daylight ; in the remaining eight cases the discovery was made at night.

<sup>1</sup> "X + Y = Z ; or, the Sleeping Preacher of North Alabama," by Rev. G. W. Mitchell. New York, 1876.



Thus, about eleven o'clock one night  $X + Y = Z$  said he saw a nickel in the lot, went out at once, walking very fast, attended by the company, and was seen to pick a nickel off the ground. In four other cases Mr. Sanders found respectively a dollar, a ten-dollar bill, a five-dollar bill, and one old dollar. In all these cases he picked up the articles himself—at night. In three cases he led his friends out *at night*, and indicated a plot of ground on which a coin would be found. In three cases only out of twelve does it appear that the object "found" had ever been lost; and yet one would scarcely suppose that the soil of a rural township in America would be so thickly sown with casual currency.<sup>1</sup>

The clairvoyance of  $X + Y = Z$  was exclusively directed to finding "lost" objects of this kind, always jewels or money, or other small articles of value, and generally in the dark. In no one of the twelve recorded instances is there any serious difficulty in the supposition that  $X + Y = Z$  had himself placed the article where it was eventually found. There can be no reasonable doubt that this was in fact the case. For there is no evidence worth considering for "clairvoyance" of this kind. There are also several analogous incidents in  $X + Y = Z$ 's experiences of apparently manufactured telepathy.

In short, we have here the case of a man who passed a considerable part of his adult life in a state of abnormal consciousness, and in that state appears to have given proof of genuine supernormal powers, and

<sup>1</sup> In each of the three cases referred to it seems possible, or even probable, that  $X + Y = Z$  was responsible for the loss as well as the recovery of the article.

unquestionably supplemented his genuine gifts by trickery of an obvious, even childlike kind. That his trickery escaped detection—or even suspicion—was, of course, due to the high character of the waking Mr. Sanders, whom his friends knew.

The whole subject is too novel and obscure to permit us to express a decided opinion. But it seems probable that his friends were justified, and that Mr. Sanders in his normal condition was not responsible—certainly not fully responsible—for the puerile chicanery of his other self.

Yet another illustration of an apparent mixture of genuine supernormal faculty with what might be interpreted as trickery will perhaps throw further light upon the problem. In the case to be quoted the nature of the “trickery” proves it to have been automatic. Alexis Didier was a well-known professional clairvoyant of the middle decades of last century. His feats were attested by Elliotson, Townshend, Newnham, and many other mesmerists and magnetists of this country and in France. The most remarkable things told of him are the reading of words or descriptions of articles in closed packets and the descriptions of distant scenes. Many of these feats are so precisely recorded and so well authenticated that it is difficult to doubt their genuineness. They stand on the same evidential level as many of the similar incidents recorded in the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.*<sup>1</sup>

There can be little doubt that Alexis was gifted

<sup>1</sup> See especially the cases described in the *Zoist*, vol. ii. p. 517, vol. vi. p. 418, vol. ix. p. 403, vol. xi. p. 75 (Adolphe Didier), and the numerous instances recorded in Dr. Lee's “Animal Magnetism,” 1866.

with genuine telepathic powers of a remarkable kind. But his performances also included feats such as playing cards face downwards and reading with eyes bandaged, which resembled closely the ordinary trick performances of pseudo-clairvoyants. For a long time I found these questionable performances an insuperable bar to accepting the testimony, otherwise difficult to set aside, for his exercise of telepathy. But recently I have come across an interesting proof that Alexis was really in an abnormal state of consciousness during these dubious performances, and that, though his success was no doubt due to the exercise of his normal senses, he was probably not himself conscious of any deception in the matter.

One of the most puzzling of Alexis' feats was the reading in a closed book. The performance was witnessed by the celebrated conjurer Houdin, who paid Alexis two visits, and went away completely baffled. The feat was generally performed as follows: a book would be handed to Alexis, who would himself open it, holding it upright with the edges of the pages towards him, and rapidly turning the leaves over until he reached a particular page, and opened the book flat. A particular part of the open page would then be chosen, sometimes by Alexis, sometimes apparently by the spectators, and Alexis would then read a few words which would be subsequently found at a corresponding place some pages below. It is clear that, under the conditions described, we can never eliminate the possibility that Alexis, in rapidly turning the open leaves, caught a glimpse of words and sentences in some part of the book, and that he simply reproduced what he had seen. That so simple an explanation did

not suggest itself to Houdin and other skilled observers would seem to indicate that Alexis' powers of vision were preternormally acute—acute to a degree probably in excess of what deliberate training would produce.

That Alexis was not in a normal condition—that he was, in fact, acting automatically at the time—is proved by one little detail, a detail seemingly so insignificant that it escaped the notice, or at least the record, of almost all the contemporary observers. Alexis did not, as a rule—at any rate in his later sittings—speak the words at all. He preferred to *write* them.<sup>1</sup> In this one point lies the proof that Alexis was an automatist and not simply a conjurer.

A man in full possession of his normal faculties, consciously striving to reproduce an elusive memory,

<sup>1</sup> The accounts given by Elliotson and others of the séances with Alexis in 1844 are much condensed. They were mostly too much preoccupied with the marvellous side of the programme to record small—and to them insignificant—details. And even Sir John Forbes and other critical witnesses do not mention the circumstance. It is, however, stated on two occasions in the reports of 1844 that Alexis wrote the words, and he may have done so generally. But Dr. Lee, who gives a detailed account of thirteen séances with Alexis in 1849 (“Animal Magnetism,” 1866), specially mentions the writing. In eleven out of nineteen trials of reading several pages in advance, the words—in each case several words—are recorded as having been written down; in three cases the report leaves it uncertain whether they were written or spoken; in five instances they were spoken. But in four out of the five spoken tests the test was offered by Alexis, instead of being chosen by the spectators, and consisted of a single word only, *e.g.*, “Here is a curious word under my pencil.” It is clear, therefore, that Alexis preferred writing, unless he was quite sure of his accuracy. In the nineteen cases there were only three failures: one written, one spoken, one indeterminate.

would naturally speak rather than write, as involving less effort : the mere act of writing would tend to distract him. And a conjurer would unquestionably prefer speech to writing : *litera scripta manet*—it is much easier to confuse the issues and disguise a bad shot when it is a question of spoken words only. But just as inevitably as the normal man would prefer speech to writing, the automatist would prefer writing to speech. Automatic writing is much commoner than automatic speech ; it involves much slighter dissociation of consciousness, and is apparently a much more delicate and reliable method for interpreting the faint echoes of subconscious perception. It seems practically certain, then, that Alexis was an automatic writer, and that his feats of clairvoyance were so far genuine that they involved no conscious deception on his part.

These historical parallels suggest that we should never be justified, in the case of a trance automatist, in excluding a normal explanation—even though this should involve apparent dishonesty—for any revelations given by automatic writing or speech. In the case just quoted it seems probable that the dishonesty was only apparent. Alexis may well have been quite unconscious of the channel through which he derived his information. It is possible that we may be justified in taking an equally charitable view of the performances of  $X + Y = Z$ , and that the right hand of Mr. Stainton Moses may not have known what the left hand was doing.

In this connection it should be recorded that most clairvoyants of note since 1848 have at one time or another exhibited physical phenomena, if only to the extent of rapping and movements of the table, as part



of their mediumistic gifts. This is true not only of the professional mediums, but of some of the chief private clairvoyants and automatists, who have placed their services gratuitously at the disposal of the Society for Psychological Research, and whose powers of super-normal perception seem beyond question. Sometimes the physical phenomena, as in the case of Mrs. Thompson, considered in Chapter III., have been recorded without the name of the medium; generally they have taken place only in the family circle, or amongst intimate friends, and have escaped public record. But the fact remains that prior to 1902 there are few automatists of importance who do not voyage in the same boat with Home and Eusapia Palladino.<sup>1</sup> For, as the case stands, it may fairly be claimed that the occurrence of physical phenomena is *primâ facie* evidence of—I had almost written fraud, but the word does not fit the facts—the production of things which are not what they seem.

Now, there are several indications in the trance utterances of Mrs. Thompson, and some in those of Mrs. Piper, of a process for which fraud would seem too harsh a name. Make-believe, or economy of the supernormal, would better fit the facts. Dr. Richard Hodgson, who observed some suspicious circumstances in the case of six sittings with the former lady, formed

<sup>1</sup> It should be explained that the remarks in the text apply chiefly to automatists who pass into a trance or other abnormal state. Where there is only slight dissociation, as in the case of Mrs. Verrall and other more recently developed automatists who appear to retain their normal consciousness during the act of automatic writing, past experience does not, so far as I know, furnish grounds for anticipating these suspicious developments.



an altogether unfavourable opinion of her powers. The circumstances remain suspicious, but those who have given most study to the subject do not endorse Dr. Hodgson's opinion. Briefly, Dr. Hodgson found that the names and other correct information given at these six séances could have been derived from some letters placed in Mrs. Thompson's hand, or otherwise accessible to her during the séance, and that most of the incorrect information betrayed erroneous, but plausible, deductions from passages in those letters. I see no difficulty in agreeing with Dr. Hodgson that Mrs. Thompson had probably read the letters. But his conclusion that therefore Mrs. Thompson is untrustworthy seems to me to go beyond the warrant of the facts.<sup>1</sup> Miss Johnson, in the same volume (p. 163) records an instance in which Mrs. Thompson apparently derived some information from an address written on a post-card which had been handed to her inside an open envelope. Miss Johnson's impression, however, was that Mrs. Thompson was not conscious of having seen the address, and did not realise the source of her knowledge. On this supposition she would be in the same position as Alexis Didier.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Verrall notes that the only letter which was satisfactorily read in the course of twenty-two sittings with Mrs. Thompson happened to have been left in

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. pp. 138—61.

<sup>2</sup> We know from Mrs. Verrall's observations, and from the experiments with a magnet made by Messrs. Jastrow and Nuttall, that when the sensory indications are extremely faint, the percipient cannot always determine through which particular channel he gains his information, and may represent it to himself through inappropriate sensory images. Thus, Messrs. Jastrow and Nuttall occasionally knew whether

a cupboard in her writing-table for a period of three-quarters of an hour when Mrs. Thompson was alone in the house with the servants.<sup>1</sup> Again, *after* the first sitting with Miss Jane Harrison, when Mrs. Thompson had probably learnt the identity of her sitter, seven correct names were given, all of which could have been found in "Who's Who."<sup>2</sup> Again, Mrs. Thompson in the trance gave the name, age, and place of burial of a lady dead half a century before, correctly indicated her relationship to a former acquaintance, and stated that the death had come after great suffering. Precisely these five details were found recorded in an old diary unearthed in a cupboard in Mr. Thompson's house. Mrs. Thompson herself found and showed the diary to Mr. Piddington, at the same time stating that she had never seen it before.<sup>3</sup> In all these cases it may be assumed, without casting reflections on Mrs. Thompson's honesty, that the knowledge displayed in the trance came from normal sources.

There are comparatively few instances in which there is reason to suppose that Mrs. Piper may have owed her information to analogous sources. Much stricter precautions have been taken, as a rule, in her case, to close all normal avenues. And it has not been the practice

the current was "on" or "off" without realising that their knowledge was derived from very faint sounds (*Proceedings of the American S.P.R.*, pp. 322—6; old series). Mrs. Verrall saw the images of cards in which she had only felt the surfaces with her thumbs (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xi. p. 176).

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xviii. pp. 268, 269. See also p. 284 for another case of information obtained from a letter.

so frequently as with Mrs. Thompson to hand letters to Mrs. Piper. But there are a few recorded instances which seem to suggest recourse to outside sources. These instances appear to have been more frequent in her early séances. Thus, when the Rev. Robert West professed to communicate through her he gave his full name, the place of his burial, and the text on his tombstone. A lad called Guernsey, who had been drowned in Lake Pepin some years previously, furnished some particulars of the accident; the spirit of Gracie X. was accurately described in the dress in which she was portrayed in a life-size statue on her tombstone. In all these cases many correct particulars were given, including names of persons and of places—of which Mrs. Piper, as a rule, is somewhat grudging—which could have been obtained from newspapers and cemeteries, but the information was confused and inaccurate, suggesting rather imperfect reminiscences of information casually acquired than the deliberate getting up of a case.<sup>1</sup> I am not aware that many cases of this kind have been observed of recent years.

But a curious incident occurred at one of Professor Hyslop's séances, which is strongly suggestive. Professor Hyslop had an uncle, James McClellan, whose father was named John. James McClellan purported to communicate through Mrs. Piper, talked of John McClellan, and mentioned his going to the war and losing a finger there. These two statements were not true of John McClellan, the father of James. But they were true of another John McClellan, no connection of Professor Hyslop's, who had lived within a few miles

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. viii. pp. 35—43.

of John, the father of James ; and this other John McClellan is mentioned in the published history of the county.<sup>1</sup>

Amongst recent communications from the entranced Mrs. Piper the attempts at translating the Latin message—to be discussed later—point most strongly to what may be called illegitimate sources of information. As will be seen, the translations given in the trance are difficult to reconcile either with the theory of communication from the dead or that of telepathy from the living. Another suspicious incident is the mistranslation of *mori*.<sup>2</sup>

To sum up. The presumption of honesty based upon the character and conduct of waking life counts for nothing in the case of a medium who is liable to pass into spontaneous trances. For the upper consciousness, the primary personality, the real self, the man or woman whom we know and regard as a friend, who lives a sane and healthy life amongst men and women like himself, who does his day's work and fulfils his social duties—this familiar person is not responsible for the words spoken by his mouth or for the writing produced by his hand in the trance. Writing and speech alike are the work of some other intelligence. In most cases that other intelligence is unquestionably of the same substance as the primary consciousness—it is either a maimed and mutilated form of it or an allotropic modification of it.

Nevertheless, in this secondary self—or personified subconsciousness—which we have learnt to know not

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. pp. 110, 470, 535.

<sup>2</sup> See below, Chapter V., the *Sevens* incident.

merely through the revelations of the séance-room, but from the careful studies of many French, German, and American physicians, we have to deal with a being of marked characteristics, which display a curious uniformity, notwithstanding the numerous diversities between the primary selves of the subjects. To begin with, the trance personality is commonly non-moral, in the sense that many children and some savages are non-moral. It knows little of the respect felt by the civilised adult for the thing that is, and still less for the thing that ought to be. It has few scruples. It shows little desire, perhaps has little aptitude, for distinguishing between fact and fiction; it has a childlike zest for make-believe, a childlike spontaneity of dramatic faculty, and uses whatever material it can find, or invent, to support its self-suggested phantasies. It presents us, in a word, with the supreme example of art for art's sake. Its motive force, again, seems to be a childlike vanity which will not permit it to say, "I don't know," but prefers any kind of disingenuous evasion to a plain confession of ignorance. Again, this dream self which wakens when the true self is asleep has some of its faculties very much alive. It frequently shows an abnormal cunning in fishing for information, and marvellous ingenuity in piecing together the scraps so gained. To this must be added that in many cases we have in the utterances of the secondary self proof, which it is almost impossible to gainsay, of a faculty by which this uncanny monster can on occasion read the secret thoughts of those who consult her as an oracle.

It is not merely possible, then, that a trance medium will, when opportunity serves, avail himself of any



normal means to achieve the end aimed at by the entranced intelligence ; historical precedents indicate that it is probable that he will do so. And the lives of Stainton Moses and  $X + Y = Z$  show us that an automatist may habitually employ what in other circumstances would be called dishonest methods in order to impress his friends with a belief in his marvellous powers ; may all the time escape detection in making the necessary preparations ; and may thus continue to enjoy, and possibly to deserve, an unblemished reputation in his normal life.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MEDIUMSHIP OF MRS. PIPER

MRS. PIPER, as already indicated, is a trance medium, who has lived for many years in Boston, U.S.A. The main outlines of her psychical history are as follows: In 1884, as a young woman, she consulted for some ailment a professional clairvoyant named Dr. Cocke. At her second visit to Dr. Cocke Mrs. Piper herself became entranced, and was thereafter controlled by a large number of "spirits"—an Indian girl named Chlorine, Mrs. Siddons, Bach, Longfellow, Commodore Vanderbilt, Loretta Ponchini, and a French doctor named Phinuit. In the following year, when Mrs. Piper first came under the observation of Professor James and other members of the Society for Psychical Research, Phinuit had obtained almost exclusive control, a position he retained until 1896, when, as will hereafter be related, he was ousted by a band of superior spirits under the guidance of Imperator. Since 1885 Mrs. Piper has been under the almost continuous observation and supervision of members of the Society for Psychical Research. Dr. Hodgson assumed entire charge of her sittings until his death in December, 1905. Since that date the arrangements generally have been in the hands of the English or American Societies for Psychical Research. Mrs. Piper visited this country

in 1889-90, and gave numerous sittings, under the direction of F. W. H. Myers, Sir O. Lodge, and Dr. Walter Leaf. The general character of her trance utterances is too well known to call for detailed description.

The following account of two séances, not conspicuously better than many other séances at this period, will give a fair idea of their nature. Mrs. A., the sitter in the first case, was on a brief visit at Cambridge to her sister, Mrs. B. The brother, whose "funny arm" is described, is a literary man, distinguished rather than well known, and it is improbable that Mrs. Piper had ever heard of him, and practically impossible that by normal means she should have known of his relationship to the sister, whose visit was both incognito and impromptu.

Mrs. A. had come to call at Mr. Myers' house on the morning of November 24, 1888. She was introduced to Mrs. Piper and taken upstairs to sit in a few minutes. It is therefore in the highest degree improbable that Mrs. Piper could have had any opportunity of learning anything about her beforehand. She was, of course introduced under another name than her own. The following notes were taken by Mr. Myers :

I see a sister . . . in the body. She has not been well ; has changed her surroundings.

[The name given was an approach to the right name of one sister, which was afterwards given correctly. It is, however, not correct to say that the sister in question has "changed her surroundings."]

I see Jessie Poder [?]. [Not recognised.]

You have three sisters and two brothers in the body ; an elderly gentleman in the spirit, your father. [Right.]

One of your brothers has a funny arm, the right arm

paralysed ; very funny [points to a place a little above the elbow on inside of arm]. That is sore ; it is lame. It is on the cord and hurts him, troubles him a good deal. I think I could help him. It has been coming some time. He can't use his arm ; it aches. He is a smart fellow and could do a great deal of good if he could use his arm. Show me some article belonging to him. The lump keeps growing. He is a nice fellow and has done a great deal of good. He will do more if he can use his arm. I can't see the future about that.

[This is a correct description of Mrs. A.'s eldest brother, who suffers from writer's cramp, which seriously hinders him in his profession. There is a lump on the arm which gives him pain ; but it is significant that it is, in fact, below the elbow, not above it. But Mrs. A. at the time believed it to be above the elbow, as it was described to her.]

A spirit (Joseph) comes near to you ; an uncle on the father's side. [Not recognised.]

Timothy is the nearest spirit you have got to you ; some call him Tim ; he is your father. Timothy was your grandfather also. Your father tells me about S. W. Stay, I can't get that, I must wait. Your mother had trouble in the stomach ; she is in the spirit-world. Your father had trouble in heart and head. Myers' father passed away from disease to the heart.

[Except the allusion to " S. W.," which is not recognisable, the above is all true, if the " trouble in heart and head " be taken to refer to Mr. Myers' father, as seems to be intended.]

I see Laurie, Lausia. [Not recognised.]

You have a brother Jim, James, in the body. He is so funny ; it is hard to get at him. He is kind of stubborn, self-willed. A little quiet influence manages him, but he is wilful if pushed. He comes with the same influence as your father.

[This is a true description of Mrs. A.'s second brother. Mr. Myers now asked what the father Timothy was interested in ; what kind of things he did in earth life, or cared for now.]

He is interested in the Bible—a clergyman. He used to preach. He has a Bible with him, he goes on reading and

advancing. He is living with your mother just the same as on earth. He has been in the spirit-world longer than she has. Your mother is a little nervous. I can't get her to come near. Your father has a solemn, graceful manner, as he had on earth. He had trouble with his throat—irritation [points to bronchial tubes]. The boys used to call him Tim at college.

[The above statements are all correct, so far as they can be verified.]

Howell, a friend of his, has passed over. [Not known.]

This is the first time your father has spoken to you since he passed out. You may hear footsteps. You do a great deal of work. Sometimes you get a little blue and depressed. You exercise your body. Do you like that picture of your father in the hall? [here confused as to whether oil or crayon; not photograph]. He has a high collar and a garb partly white; white in front, round neck, like a high collar, and dark waistcoat. He has a prominent nose, his eyes very clear and grey, bluish grey; a good-sized man. [Here confused talk as to colour of eyes. Dr. P. says he is not good at colours, and shuffles about.] Brownish grey, hazel; your eyes are lighter than his. He has a firm expression round the mouth, a determined expression.

[The account of the portrait is not very satisfactory; but it is true that there is a large oil portrait of him in Mrs. A.'s sisters' house in ecclesiastical garb, something as stated. His eyes were brown.]

Then followed immediately the names of five persons and a description of a sixth, none of which were recognised. No other incorrect names were given. After this the name of the mother and the names of two sisters were correctly given. The sitter's own name was given nearly, but not quite, correctly, and she was identified as the daughter of her mother, but not as being present. Some description of the grandchildren was given, partially correct, but showing some confusion. Other statements about illness, &c., of other members of the family were partly true and partly false.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. pp. 581—3.



It will be seen that there were several names unrecognised and some untrue, irrelevant, confused, or unverified statements, but the names of the brother, father, grandfather, and mother were all given correctly and without any fishing or ambiguity, and were assigned definitely to their proper owners, living or dead. The names of the sisters and the sitter's own name were given after some hesitation and ineffectual attempts; but the number of definite, true statements puts the question of chance guessing wholly out of court.

In the next case also the sitter, Mr. Harlow Gale, was a stranger, introduced anonymously and unexpectedly, and in a way which made it certain that information could not have been got up beforehand about him. The sitting took place at Professor Sidgwick's house at Cambridge, on January 22, 1890. Mrs. Sidgwick was present and took full notes, from which the following account is summarised:

The sitting was chiefly occupied with a description of different members of Mr. Gale's family, which he recognised as strikingly accurate. The following are the most important points:

What is that thing your father wears over his shoulders? He looks quite important in it. He wears it because of his throat. He is in a different place from here.

[Mr. Gale says that the most noticeable point in his father's appearance is a white silk handkerchief which he wears because of a sensitiveness of his throat. He lives in Minnesota.]

Your father is a queer genius—dreamy. He does not do much; he leaves that to some one else. He has an office, a desk, books, &c. His peculiarities strike me very much.

[Mr. Gale says that this is all right, as far as it goes.]

William, a brother. He is small, a bright little fellow, dark eyes, clear complexion, a pretty fellow, smart as a cricket.

[Mr. Gale says that this is a correct account of his brother William, a boy of sixteen ; except that he is some 5 ft. 7 in. in height, whereas the medium indicated with her hand a height of not more than 4 ft.]

You have got a sister. She sings and plays two different instruments ; one with keys and one with strings—particularly the one with keys. She is a little younger than you, probably ; but her age is difficult to tell from her appearance. She is older than William.

[Mr. Gale has a sister younger than himself and older than his brother William. She sings and plays the piano well, but does not play any stringed instrument.]

There is a minister in your family, an uncle, in the spirit. Tall, fine physique ; wears spectacles ; with a high forehead ; something like you. He is your father's brother. He died some little time ago—away from you across the water. He died suddenly. [Asked what denomination he belonged to, Dr. P. could not tell.] He used to wear a cape—a long coat thing. He was not Episcopal, but like a Methodist—that sort of doctrine.

[Mr. Gale had an uncle, his father's brother, who was a Baptist missionary in Minnesota. The description of him is accurate, except that he would not be considered a tall man. He died suddenly fifteen years ago while travelling in Palestine. He never wore a cape at home, but had one made before leaving for his trip to Palestine, to wear on his overcoat.]

There are five of you. [After some counting and a little help from Mr. Gale, Dr. P. said that there were five not counting the mother—three boys and a girl, father and mother. Right.]

Dr. P. then attempted to get the name of the second brother, trying George, Geord, Jordan, Jorge, but finally giving it up. The brother's second name is Griggs, but he is never called by it. Dr. P. went on :

He gets round about the boys as well as any one. He's got many friends ; they all like him. He is very happy-go-lucky—musical—he can do everything, whistle, sing, and dance. He is not far away. He has lots of letters and friends. Girls like him very much. He is studying to be a lawyer or doctor, or something of that sort. He gets into different costumes and acts. Do they call him Jack? John? They call him Pete ; they call him everything.

[None of these names were right, though he is called by many names. Nor is he studying for a profession. In other respects the statements are accurate. This brother is the only one of Mr. Gale's family who is not far away, in America. The name of Will Adams was given as that of a friend; but the brother has only the slightest acquaintance with a man of that name.]

A correct description was given of Mr. Gale's mother. She was said to look very young for her age. "She and William are more like one another than the rest of the family. She is small and rather dark." These and other traits given are said by Mr. Gale to be strikingly correct.

The name Edward was then tried, and applied to brother, father, and uncle, all wrongly.

When your mother went away it did her a great deal of good; she had a cold on her chest. She has been staying with an elderly gentleman.

[Mr. Gale's mother took a trip for her health last spring, and returned greatly improved. But nothing is known of the elderly gentleman.]

Your grandfather on your mother's side was lame. [Asked "All his life?"] No; but that one time. You don't remember that, but your mother will tell you.

[Mr. Gale finds that his maternal grandfather was lame from a stroke of paralysis for some ten months. He remembers nothing of this, as he did not see his grandfather during this time.]

Edward: is he your uncle or your cousin? I don't like him, and I don't know that any one did. He don't seem to get on, somehow.

[Mr. Gale recognises this as a cousin.]

The name of Alice was given, and finally said to belong to Edward's sister. This was right; but she was wrongly said to be musical. After this the statements made were mostly wrong. The name of Williams was given: "It was your uncle, I think; a relative connected by marriage. I think on the mother's side."

[Mr. Gale remarks: "I have a second cousin on my mother's side named Williams, whom we always call "aunt," however. She has been a widow many years, and I never saw her husband."]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. pp. 642—3.

In commenting on this sitting Mrs. Sidgwick writes :

“ During all the earlier part of it, Phinuit gave the impression of really knowing what he was talking about. He described Mr. Gale’s father and mother as if he had them before him, in a bad light, perhaps, or rather far off, so that he could not make them out with absolute distinctness, but still as if he was trying to describe what he saw, not at all as if he were guessing.”<sup>1</sup>

The significant point in these early sittings is that the information given about the sitter’s living friends seems, generally speaking, to have been as vivid, as copious, and as accurate as the information given about the dead, and that there is no means, as a rule, of discriminating between them either as regards substance or source—that is, the statements about the dead and the living alike are given as if they proceeded directly from Phinuit’s own knowledge. Sometimes, on the other hand, where the dead are concerned the utterances are put into their mouths, but there is rarely any indication that this is more than a traditional dramatic device.

The result of these early séances was to leave all those who had carefully studied the matter profoundly convinced that Mrs. Piper was gifted, at the lowest, with some supernormal faculty of acquiring information.

Shortly after her return to America an arrangement was made under which Dr. Hodgson took entire charge of her séances, himself making all appointments and arrangements, undertaking or providing for a full report of what took place, and introducing all sitters

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 618.

under assumed names. A year or two later a change took place in the conditions. "Phinuit" still assumed control from the spiritual side, but whereas in the séances held in this country the communications had been made almost exclusively by voice, the entranced Mrs. Piper would now by preference write her communications, the voice still being used occasionally, especially during the prolonged process of emerging from the trance at the end of the sittings.

There had been during Mrs. Piper's stay in this country several instances in which deceased friends of the sitter had purported to speak, sometimes directly through the medium's organism, sometimes through the intervention of Phinuit. But the circumstances had not admitted of any prolonged display of these impersonations, and there are many details in these early séances which point strongly to some form of thought transference as the sole and sufficient explanation of the phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

But in 1892 opportunity occurred to put the question of spirit control to a more searching test.

George Pelham (the name is assumed) was a young American lawyer and author, well known to Richard Hodgson, who in February, 1892, died suddenly as the result of an accident in New York.<sup>2</sup> Hodgson and he had had long talks on philosophic subjects and had discussed the possibility of a future life, which to Pelham seemed incredible and inconceivable. Four

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. J. T. Clarke's séance, *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. pp. 569—74. On the other side, see Sir Oliver Lodge's report, pp. 458—64.

<sup>2</sup> The account which follows is taken from Hodgson's report in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 284—582.



years before his death he had had a single sitting with Mrs. Piper, but his name had been carefully concealed from the medium, and there is no reason to suppose that she knew of the existence of such a person. Mrs. Piper, it should be added, resided in the suburbs of Boston; Pelham, who had lived for many years in Boston, had passed the last three years of his life in New York.

Between four and five weeks after George Pelham's death, on March 22, 1892, a friend of his, John Hart (assumed name) was having a sitting with Mrs. Piper. In the middle of the séance Phinuit, who purported to be controlling, said: "There is another George who wants to speak to you—how many Georges are there about you, anyway?"

The "other George" purported to be George Pelham. He gave his full name correctly, also the full name of the sitter (presumably unknown to Mrs. Piper) and the names—Christian and surname—of several of George Pelham's most intimate friends. He recognised as his own a stud which the sitter was wearing, saying, "That's mine. Father gave you that. [No.] Well, then, father and mother together. Mother took them. Gave them to father, and father gave them to you." This was, in fact, correct: the stepmother had taken them from the dead body. George Pelham mentioned two intimate friends, James and Mary Howard, and gave a message to Katharine (their daughter): "Tell her; she'll know. I will solve the problems, Katharine." On this Mr. Howard later explained that Pelham, when he had last stayed with them, had had frequent talks with Katharine, a girl of fifteen, on the great problems of existence,

and had promised her, in almost the words of his spirit message, that some time he would solve them. George Pelham referred by name to Meredith and Rogers, two other friends, with appropriate messages.

At the first sitting with Mr. Howard, on April 10th, G. P. greeted him with entirely natural familiarity, and made relevant remarks about Rogers and his deceased daughter, Martha, and two other friends, Berwick and Orenberg. Mr. Howard states of this séance that "all the references to persons, incidents, characters, &c., so far as they are known to living persons, are correct."

Mr. Howard, though much impressed, remained for a time unconvinced. At a sitting some months later, however, in December of the same year, he reminded G. P. of the many summers and winters which they had spent together in G. P.'s lifetime, and asked for some convincing proof, something known to him and G. P. alone, to show that the communicating intelligence was really what it claimed to be. Then, as Hodgson, who acted as notetaker, described the scene, whilst Mrs. Piper's body lay inert and apparently lifeless, the right hand impatiently and fiercely, wrote in answer to Mr. Howard's request.

"Several statements were read by me, and assented to by Mr. Howard, and then was written 'private,' and the hand gently pushed me away. I retired to the other side of the room, and Mr. Howard took my place close to the hand where he could read the writing. He did not, of course, read it aloud, and it was too private for my perusal. The hand, as it reached the end of each sheet, tore it off from the block book, and thrust it wildly at Mr. Howard, and then continued writing. The circumstances narrated, Mr. Howard informed me, contained precisely the kind of test for which he had asked, and he said that he was

'perfectly satisfied, perfectly.' After this incident there was some further conversation, with references to the past that seemed specially natural as coming from G. P."

An extract from the second sitting with Mr. Howard will give some idea of the nature of the impersonation.

*Second. November 28, 1892.*

Present: Mr. and Mrs. Howard, and (part of the time) their eldest daughter Katharine, R. H., and Reporter.

Phinuit: He [G. P.] has been to see his father, and he has seen, he has taken a book and carried it to have it printed. [His father had collected his poems and had them printed in a small volume, which appeared just before the first sitting of this series.]

During the early part of the sitting, Katharine entered the room and sat down in a remote corner. Almost immediately Phinuit said, "He wants to see who is Katrine." Katharine comes over, and G. P. takes control of the voice, and personal greetings follow. . . . Recognition of dress, also of shawl, which was asked for, and which was placed over Mrs. Piper's shoulders.

"What is it takes me to Paris?" The shawl had been worn in Paris frequently during a year, but there is no reason to suppose that G. P. living was aware of this.

G. P. inquired what had been done with a special picture which he had owned.

Mrs. H.: That got torn up after you passed out, but here is a picture that I don't know whether you will recognise, but you used to know the place. [G. P. puts picture on top of the head.] . . .

G. P.: What is this? This is your summer house.

Mrs. H.: Yes, you have got it right.

G. P.: But I have forgotten the name of the town.

Mrs. H.: Don't you remember D— ?

G. P.: Oh, the little brick house and the little vine, grape-vine, some call them. Yes, I remember it all; it comes back as distinctly as the daylight. . . . Where is the little out-house? [All correct. The little brick hen-house that, like the house itself, was solidly built of brick

just did not come into the picture, but came to the very edge of it, so it was natural for George to ask where it was. The grape-vine that covered the whole house up to the roof was a striking feature of it.—K.] . . .

Mrs. H.: There is the painting [handing another picture].

G. P.: No, I have no recollection of that.

Mrs. H.: No, I painted it when you were not there. You never saw that.

G. P.: It is not fresh to me at all; but this [fingering the photo of the house] is very clear. Katharine.

Mrs. H.: She remembers that too.

G. P.: She was a little thing. Then you bought a place at some *ville* [Katharine's age when we left D— was six, nearly seven. We first bought the place at X—ville in 1886]. Further references to personal incidents at D—, "Katharine, how is the violin?" [She plays the violin.] . . . To hear you playing it is horrible, horrible. . . .

Mrs. H.: But don't you see she likes her music because it is the best she has?

G. P.: No, but that is what I used to say, that it is horrible. [George was always more or less annoyed by hearing Katharine practise when she was beginning the violin as a little child.—K.]

G. P.: [A basket put into G. P.'s hands which he had given as a Christmas present.] That is mine. Where is my lamp arrangement? I was very fond of that, you know. [He had also expressly got a small light shade that could be moved round the shade of an ordinary lamp to cut off the light from the eye, and he had used this much when living. He had made other references to this in previous sittings.] . . .

Mrs. H.: I want you to see that [handing a paper<sup>1</sup>].

G. P.: You wrote that to me this morning. [It was a poem on death written that morning with G. P. in mind, but no reference to G. P. in it.] . . .

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<sup>1</sup> It must be assumed that these papers may have come within the field of vision of Mrs. Piper, but my conviction is that the trance personalities do not obtain any information by the ordinary process of vision. [Note by R. Hodgson.]

[Another paper handed.<sup>1</sup>] That is a letter. That is mine . That is my own, but that was written a long time ago. [Correct. A letter of his written many years before.] . . .

Give my regards to James Peirce. Tell him I could not speak to him, but I will again, and when you dine with him, think of me.

[George occasionally dined at the house of James Peirce in company with Mr. Howard.]

Mr. H. : George, do you know who this is from? [handing an unopened newspaper<sup>1</sup> enclosed in a wrapper as if just received in the mail].

After saying, "Where is John Hart?" G. P. correctly stated that the newspaper came from Orenberg ; then to Mr. Howard he said, "Get the long pipe and smoke." [Mr. Howard was in the habit of smoking a long pipe in the evening.]

Partially coming out of the trance, Mrs. Piper described a gentleman with a beard and a high forehead. She then became re-entranced, and on finally emerging from the trance some time later she picked out from nine photographs of men an excellent likeness of G. P. as being the man she had seen.<sup>2</sup>

It will be seen that the impersonation was natural and lifelike, and that the intelligence manifesting in the trance showed apparent knowledge of the country house which his friends had left six years before, and of the early childhood of their daughter. Nothing is indeed stated which was not within the present consciousness of the sitters, but its presentment must be admitted to be dramatically true to life, and no misstatements appear to have been made.

Some interesting experiments were made to test the control's power of seeing things on earth. G. P. was

<sup>1</sup> See Note on previous page.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 414—18.



asked to watch and report his father's movements. He correctly stated that his father had taken a photograph of his '(G. P.'s) to the artist to have it copied. In fact, the negative had been accidentally broken. Another experiment on the same lines produced more interesting results. G. P. was asked at the sitting of April 28, 1892, to visit Mrs. Howard and report what she was doing. Mrs. Howard meanwhile had arranged with Dr. Hodgson to do various fantastic things as a test. Later in the séance G. P. purported to come back to report through Phinuit :

She's writing, and taken some violets and put them in a book. And it looks as if she's writing that to my mother. . . . Who's Tyson . . . Davis. . . . I saw her [Mrs. Howard] sitting in the chair, sitting before a little desk or table. Took little book, opened it, wrote letter he thinks to his mother. Saw her take a little bag and put some things in it belonging to him, placed the photograph beside her on the desk. That's hers. Sent a letter to T A S O N (Tyson?) T Y S O N.

\* \* \* \* \*

She hunted a little while for her picture, sketching. He's certain that the letter is to his mother. She took one of George's books and turned it over, and said : " George, are you here? Do you see that? " These were the very words. Then she turned and went up a short flight of stairs. Took some things from a drawer, came back again, sat down to the desk, and then finished the letter.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Hodgson sent a copy of this report to Mrs. Howard who replied as follows :

" DEAR MR. HODGSON,—I did *none* of those things to—

<sup>1</sup> The extract quoted contains all that passed at the séance on the test in question ; the portions omitted refer to the concerns of the sitter, and to some questions asked by Hodgson.

day, but *all* of them yesterday afternoon and the evening before!

"Yesterday afternoon I wrote a note to Mrs. Tyson declining an invitation to lunch; this I did at a little table. Later I wrote to his mother at a desk, and seeing George's violets by me in their envelope, gave them to my daughter to put in my drawer, not 'into a book.' This is the only inaccuracy of detail. The day before I also wrote to his mother, putting his photograph before me on the table while I was writing—two of his photos, in fact, one from another photo and one from a portrait I had painted of him; these I afterwards put into his mother's letter. Did 'hunt for my picture,' my painting of him. Also wondered in my mind what they had done with the photo of me painting, and received letter from Mrs. Pelham saying they had burned it. What he says about the book is also true, though I can't tell at precisely what time I did it, as I was alone at the time. In all other matters my memory is corroborated by my daughter, who took the note to Mrs. T.'s, and saw me put photo before me on the desk. She now says that I only put *one* before me on the desk, and went and got the other just before putting it in envelope. It was only a minute on the table.

"While writing to his mother I *did* 'go and take things from a drawer, came back again, sat down to the desk, and then finished the letter.' This was the letter written at the desk, not the one written at a table.

\* \* \* \* \*

"PS.—I don't know whether I made it quite clear that I sat thinking, wondering where the photo of me while painting *could* be, and I think that in the first of the two letters I wrote to his mother, I told her he had asked for it. I know I thought of doing so.

"I seldom write to Mrs. Tyson, and this note is almost the only one I have written her this winter—have not written to her for weeks, perhaps months, before this. It is certainly strange that he should seem to know so much of my doings. I feel as if he *must* have seen them."

The correspondence, it will, no doubt, be admitted, is far too detailed here to be attributed to lucky guess-

ing. The facts came clearly from Mrs. Howard's memory—whether they were conveyed thence by a spirit disembodied, or by a spirit still in the flesh. The fact that the other sitter was a friend of the Howards as well as of G. P. himself may have some bearing upon the case, but it can scarcely be supposed that the knowledge was derived directly from his mind.

The impersonation, if it were an impersonation and not the actual G. P. manifesting through Mrs. Piper's organism, was consistently and dramatically sustained. Out of some 150 persons who had sittings with Mrs. Piper between the date of G. P.'s death and the date of Hodgson's report on the subject, five years later, there were thirty friends or acquaintances of G. P. in life. All of them were recognised, and all, a fact on which Dr. Hodgson laid much stress in discussing the matter with me orally, greeted with appropriate shades of welcome. There was only one case of failure to recognise, and in that case the sitter, in the course of the nine years which had elapsed since she had seen G. P. in the flesh, had grown from a girl to a woman. Once G. P. claimed—the exact words were: "Who is this? I have met her before"—to have seen a sitter who did not remember ever to have met G. P. in the flesh. But it is admittedly not improbable that they may have met, or at least that G. P. may have seen her (p. 327).

Some of G. P.'s most intimate friends were convinced that they were actually in communication with the deceased G. P.; nearly all were impressed by the realistic nature of the impersonation.

To set against this strong presumptive proof of identity there are several circumstances in the records

which point to another source for the communications. Thus on one occasion G. P. is reported as saying :

I wish you could convince my father and make him come here. [Can't you tell us something he or your mother has done?] I saw her brush my clothes and put them away. I was by her side as she did it. I saw her take my sleeve buttons from a small box and give them to my father. I saw him send them to John Hart. I saw her putting papers, &c., into a tin box.

The fact that the studs or sleeve-links had been taken from the dead body by the (step) mother had already been stated in the trance. But, in fact, G. P.'s clothes had been brushed and put away, not by the step-mother, but by "the man who had valeted George." The mistake would seem to indicate that in this instance, at any rate, the communication proceeded from Mrs. Piper's own intelligence. Further, G. P., in this, it may be said, resembling all the other Piper personalities, is frequently unable to give names when specially asked for them, although, as has been shown, he voluntarily gave in the earliest sittings a large number of names, all those of friends and intimates. The failure to respond to a challenge ought not to be regarded as in itself suspicious. What is suspicious is the manner in which the challenge is evaded.

Two test questions were put to G. P. at the sitting of March 30, 1892 :

1. What was the nature of the society formed by you and some other young people? 2. What were the names of the members? G. P. made two attempts—both incorrect—at the object of the society, and succeeded only in giving the Christian name of one of

the members. At a later sitting he returned to the subject, and gave the full name (known apparently to the sitter) of this one member, but excused himself in the following terms from giving the other two names :

I answered part of that question [the part he answered was correct], but did not give the names of the other two people because it would be no test, because I told her [the sitter] the names of the other two in life, and, as she knows them, if I was to give the names in her presence, they would say it was thought-transference. No, I shall reserve the two names to tell Hodgson some time when he is alone with me, because *he* does not know them. [All true.]

But the names subsequently given to Hodgson were incorrect.

The five years from 1891 to 1895 formed a very fruitful period in Mrs. Piper's mediumship. The case of G. P. has been selected for comment because the materials for forming a judgment are the most abundant, and the impersonation itself was perhaps the most striking and the best sustained. But there were other impersonations hardly inferior in lifelike qualities. The selected records—mainly of first sittings only—cover nearly two hundred octavo pages. During the whole period, Dr. Hodgson tells us, so far as his knowledge went, “there are not more than six (first) sittings that can be classed as complete failures.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reason for publishing the accounts of first sittings only is that at each successive séance the medium has more and more opportunities for acquiring by normal means knowledge of the sitter and his affairs. As every sitter was introduced under a pseudonym, generally Smith, the only chance of obtaining information by such means at a first



The results are very impressive ; and many of those who have studied the records hold that they establish at least a *prima facie* case for the belief in the possibility of communication with our departed friends.

But this highly productive period came to an end in 1896. Early in that year Mrs. Piper underwent an operation—the second—and in the autumn a fresh band of spirits purported to assume the control of her organism. The new controls forbade indiscriminate experiments with what they described as “a battered and worn-out machine”; and, in fact, the number of séances has, under the advice of these controls, been severely restricted since that date, and the privilege of a sitting has no longer been afforded with the same freedom as formerly even to serious inquirers. Of the results under these changed conditions we shall have to speak in a later chapter.

sitting would be by various processes of “fishing,” or skilful inferences from unguarded admissions in the course of the séance, and the report of the proceedings, of course, shows how far such methods were actually employed.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MEDIUMSHIP OF MRS. THOMPSON

MRS. THOMPSON, a lady who for some years was good enough to place her services freely at the disposal of the Society for Psychical Research for the purposes of the inquiry, is, or was, for she has now ceased to give sittings, a trance medium. In her earlier séances, however, the spirit communications were interspersed with physical phenomena which appear to have been of the ordinary type.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Thompson's early sittings were held in 1897 and 1898, generally at the house of Mr. F. W. Thurstan, M.A., a gentleman who at that time had charge of two Indian pupils. The regular circle consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Thompson and Mr. Thurstan, but two or three visitors who were known to be sympathetic to the medium were present at most of the sittings. The sittings took place generally in a double room, with curtains drawn over the opening of the

<sup>1</sup> During the lifetime of the late Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Thompson's connection with physical phenomena was, in deference to his wishes, suppressed; and in the accounts published in the Spiritualist newspaper *Light* during 1897 and 1898 the medium is referred to as Mrs. T. As the reasons for secrecy no longer exist, Mrs. Thompson has been good enough to grant permission for the facts to be made public.

two apartments, the space behind the curtain being without artificial light of any kind. The circle sat in the other room, the "usual conditions" being that the light was "subdued to a point at which we could just distinguish our figures as we sat opposite to each other." The medium under these conditions would be controlled by her daughter Nelly, who had died in infancy, her sister, and her mother, also by relatives of the various sitters and occasionally by strangers. "Peter Pindar," for instance, came on one occasion and gave his proper name, the dates and localities of his birth and death. Originally one Peter Wharton and some associate spirits took charge of the medium's trance, but on October 17, 1897, it was announced that Peter had left and that the band had been reinforced by seven new spirits. Four of the newcomers—Esther, Charles Wade, Annie, and another whose signature could not be deciphered—wrote their names in the course of the séance by "direct" writing.

The physical phenomena were of a familiar type—raps and knocks, the blowing out of a curtain as if by wind, spirit lights, movements of a tambourine, a lamp shade, a toy trumpet, chairs, and tables. Once a heavy table is reported as moving continuously for some minutes whilst the medium was eight feet away. On several occasions the table was levitated. Once the medium is described as being elongated to the extent of six inches.

There were several instances of materialisation. On January 1, 1898, a sitting was held at Mrs. Thompson's own house, the sitters being Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, their little daughter Rosie, Mr. Thurstan, and two friends, Mr. and Mrs. A. A pair of light curtains

were hung so as to cut off a corner of the room. Mrs. Thompson sat in the opening of the curtains facing the company, who sat round in a horseshoe, Mr. Thurstan next the curtain on the medium's right, Mr. Thompson in the corresponding position on the left. The lamp was turned out, and the circle sat "in a dim light in which we could just distinguish one another." Then, to quote Mr. Thurstan's report :

"While we were singing Clare controlled Mrs. T., and joined in the hymn, at the end of which she whispered to me in the direct voice to place my hand behind the curtain at the opening by the wall on my side, and I found a lily-of-the-valley leaf and flower placed in it ; and, soon afterwards, a number of additional lilies were flung out for the rest. There were none of these flowers in the house at the time. While we sang, once more my hand, remaining behind the curtain, was fondled by 'Clare,' and a soft, gauzy, scented, white drapery was flung over my head and seen by the others on my side of the room. Then Mrs. T. felt 'Clare,' who also passed over to the other side and touched Mr. T. with her fingers and her drapery. As her power increased, her voice also gained strength and *timbre* ; and, in a direct voice, loud but sweet, and with a mannerism of utterance noticeably distinct from that of Mrs. T., she said that if Mrs. A. and Mr. A. would change places with me and Mr. T. she would touch them. This was done, and Rosie also had her turn ; and then Mr. T. and I resumed our chairs. All this while Mrs. T. was in full consciousness, but she kept exclaiming that she felt 'all hollow' ; and another thing she noticed was that whenever 'Clare's' fingers touched any one she distinctly felt a pricking sensation in her body, very similar to her experiences when she had been placed once on an insulating stool and charged with electricity, and persons had touched her to make sparks come from her.

"After this, some beautiful spirit lights were seen behind the curtains, which were of a diaphanous art muslin. They floated to the top of the curtains some nine feet above the ground, Mrs. T. all the while remaining seated. Then, while

my sister ' Clare ' was still touching my hand and talking to me, ' Nellie's ' voice was suddenly heard by her father's side, saying, ' I am here ' ; and both father and mother were in raptures to feel the touch of the vanished hand of their little daughter caressing them. Simultaneously ' Clare ' was speaking to me on a private matter ; and, finally asking me to bend forward my head towards her, she flung her drapery round my neck and laid her palms on my head as if to bless me. All of us agreed that the touch of the fingers felt warm and life-like ; the whole air was also filled with a subtle, strange perfume."

It would seem that the materialised figures were not seen, but only heard and felt. This is clear, not only from the account above quoted, but from the corroborative testimony of Mr. and Mrs. A., who write as follows :

" My wife says that once, when she was holding Mrs. T.'s hands and kneeling just in front of her, she felt at the same time touches of ' Clare's ' hands and soft drapery fall over her head and neck. I also noticed the presence of more than one visitant at the same time ; for while I was talking with one whose direct voice I heard, I felt several touches on my hand and knees from another simultaneously, and also noticed a spirit light moving about at the same time."

Sheffield.

W. A.

E. A.

At another materialisation séance held three weeks later under the same conditions two or three materialised figures were seen, but apparently by Mrs. Thompson only, the sitters again only heard and felt. The materialisations were not therefore so striking as some which have been afforded by other mediums. On the other hand, the apports, which were numerous, left no doubt of their objectivity. Thus, again to quote an illustration from Mr. Thurstan's report :



“When Mr. and Mrs. T. were spending the day with me at Eton last Sunday, and we were seated chatting round the fire, about 3 p.m., suddenly Mr. T. noticed a banana lying on the floor between my chair and that of Mrs. T., who objected to its having been found so suspiciously close to her. Presently, when Mrs. T. had her purse in her hand, counting her money in case it should be spirited away, and Mr. T. was bending over her, helping her, and I was at the piano in the far end of the room, down fell two pistachio nuts with considerable force just past me, as if they had fallen from the ceiling straight above me. While my two Indian charges, in another corner of the room, were laughing at this incident, down came another shower of three more pistachio nuts and two walnuts at their feet. We were then told that if we sat at the table and raised the table-cover, by placing a cardboard box under it, we should get some white grapes brought. So we five sat as directed in full light, with our hands on the cloth; and, after half an hour, during which ‘Mr. Giles’ manifested by raps and gave Mr. T. an important direction relating to his business, we were told that the grapes had come. I raised the cloth and found them in the centre of the dining-table, five of them in a bunch, fresh and uncrushed. I asked ‘Nellie,’ who came to explain matters, how it was that they knew that while I had most other kinds of fruit in the house I had no pistachios or walnuts, bananas or white grapes. She said the friends had come the day before, when I was buying fruit, to impress me not to buy those particular kinds. This little detail I mention . . . as showing that the phenomenon, apparently occurring so *extempore*, was really the result of careful rehearsing and pre-arrangement.”

On another occasion Mr. Thompson was holding both Mrs. Thompson’s hands as a test, to see whether the Hindoo sowar, who occasionally controlled, could under these conditions make his characteristic tinkling noises. Mr. Thurstan was seated at her side watching her hands. After waiting some minutes without result, “suddenly at the back of her chair we heard

something drop heavily out of the air, falling first on the top of the back and then slipping to the seat behind her." It proved to be a florin, and Mr. Thurstan tells us that Mrs. Thompson tied it in a corner of her handkerchief, intending to give it to a poor woman, and found next day that the knot was still there, but the coin had vanished.

The above extracts give a fair impression of the physical phenomena produced in Mrs. Thompson's presence. She ceased, I believe, to sit for physical phenomena shortly after making, in 1898, the acquaintance of Mr. F. W. H. Myers, and thereafter, as already said, gave her services to the S. P. R. as a trance medium.

Mrs. Thompson's trances are much lighter than those of Mrs. Piper, and appear to be scarcely distinguishable from the state of normal wakefulness. Unlike Mrs. Piper, too, she has occasional flashes of what purports to be supernormal perception outside the séance-room, and sometimes in what appears to be a normal condition.

Thus, on May 8, 1894, Mrs. Thompson paid a visit to a dentist named Reeve, and whilst seated in the chair was observed by the dentist to have fallen into a kind of trance, in which she was apparently insensible to the pain of the operation. In this trance she saw the vision of a girl named Annie Reeve, an old school-fellow. She mentioned the incident to Mr. Reeve next day, and he then told her that Annie Reeve was a cousin, but a stranger to him until the previous day. He had actually seen her for the first time in his life an hour after Mrs. Thompson's departure. At Mr. Reeve's request Mrs. Thompson described the dress

worn by the vision, which corresponded accurately, with the reality.<sup>1</sup>

On another occasion Mrs. Thompson, this time in a normal condition, saw a message in a crystal containing an unquestionable, if somewhat muddled, reference to an acquaintance of Mr. Piddington's.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Piddington cites two or three other instances of supernormal perception in a normal condition.

Thus Mrs. Thompson writes :

" May 24, 1900.

" On Monday, March 7, 1900, about 7.30 in the evening, I happened to be sitting quite alone in the dining-room, and thinking of the possibility of my subliminal communicating with that of another person—no one in particular. I was not for one moment unconscious. All at once I felt some one was standing near, and quietly opened my eyes, and was very surprised to see—clairvoyantly, of course—Mr. J. G. Piddington. I was very keen to try the experiment, so at once spoke to him aloud. He looked so material and lifelike I did not feel in the least alarmed.

" I commenced :

" ' Please tell me of something I may afterwards verify to prove I am really speaking of you.'

" J. G. P.—' I have had a beastly row with —— ' [naming a specified person.]

" R. T.—' What about?' [No answer to this.]

" J. C. P.—' He says he did not intend to annoy me, but I said he had been very successful in doing so, whether he intended or not.'

" After saying that he disappeared."

Mr. Piddington explains that all the details are

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xviii. pp. 108—10. The episode sufficiently impressed Mr. Reeve to induce him to write a full account of it the same day. Of course, Mrs. Thompson may have caught a glimpse of Miss Reeve in the street on her way to the dentist.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

correct, even to the exact words used by him. The quarrel had been conducted by correspondence ; Mr. Piddington's final remark had been addressed to Mrs. Piddington at breakfast, and he regards it as highly improbable that Mrs. Thompson could have known of the quarrel, and impossible that she should have heard of the remark.<sup>1</sup>

In another instance Mrs. Thompson on leaving the rooms of the Society for Psychical Research one afternoon, and when in full possession of her normal senses, made an unmistakable reference to a curious and altogether unusual incident connected with the purchase of Mr. Piddington's coat, which was hanging on the door.<sup>2</sup>

As in the parallel case of Mrs. Piper, it rarely happens that the spirit professing to communicate through the entranced Mrs. Thompson is allowed to

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xviii. p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> It will be noted that of the four incidents quoted the first is readily susceptible of a normal explanation. The other three are concerned with one particular person. Mr. Piddington was, at the time of the first incident, unknown personally to Mrs. Thompson, but she may very well have known his name as a friend of Mr. Myers. The other two incidents occurred when Mr. Piddington was Honorary Secretary to the Society, and had much to do with the arrangements of the séances with Mrs. Thompson, and naturally saw a great deal of that lady. This would no doubt facilitate telepathy between them. It would also in various ways facilitate leakage of information through normal channels. The incidents, to my thinking, are worth little as evidence for supernormal faculty ; they are quoted here as having some bearing upon the question discussed in Chapter I. of the present book. I should perhaps add that the supernormal source of much of the information given at Mrs. Thompson's séances seems to me to be almost beyond dispute.

take direct possession of the medium's organism. The usual control is "Nelly," whose acquaintance we have already made at the séances with Mr. Thurstan's circle.

Nelly is assisted in her task by "Mrs. Cartwright," a lady who kept a girls' school at which Mrs. Thompson was educated. A Mr. D. also occasionally assists in the control. Some further account of these trance personalities will be given in a later chapter.

Two instances of successful séances with Mrs. Thompson may be cited. Mr. J. O. Wilson<sup>1</sup> had two interviews in January, 1900. The lady to whom he had been engaged, Miss Clegg (assumed name), had been killed a few months previously as the result of a bicycle accident. At the time of the sittings Mr. J. O. Wilson was staying with Miss Clegg's family, and occupying the room described by Nelly which had been Miss Clegg's. A girl cousin who had been devoted to Miss Clegg was staying in the house at the same time. Throughout the first séance the girl cousin and Miss Clegg would appear to be referred to indiscriminately, but Mr. Wilson and Mr. Piddington state that there was no actual confusion in the references. It remains to add that Mr. Wilson was but slightly acquainted with Mr. Piddington, and had no connection of any kind with Mrs. Thompson, who did not even know his name.

Mr. Wilson handed to Mrs. Thompson at the beginning of the séance a stocking which had belonged to the deceased lady. After one or two inconclusive remarks, the trance intelligence, "Nelly," proceeds :

<sup>1</sup> The name is assumed, as Mr. Wilson is unwilling to give his real name for fear of causing pain to the relatives of Miss "Clegg."



The feeling is of live influence. Please tell me if it is of a dead influence.

[J. G. P. says "dead," on receiving information from J. O. W.]

I can see a girl with hair down her back, darker than mother's [*i.e.*, Mrs. Thompson's], but not black, not pushed back, but a cutting over the forehead like a fringe.

[This is a very good description of a girl cousin of the deceased lady.]

\* \* \* \* \*

Is it too ordinary to say blue dress with white braid on? Sort of sailor dress.

[All this fits well for the deceased lady's cousin, who at the time was wearing a kind of sailor dress trimmed with white braid.]

Oh, dear! something like something coming. There is something in an envelope I ought to have belonging to the lady. The girl in blue and the lady connected with the stocking are not the same person.

\* \* \* \* \*

I've got it in my head that this stocking has been round somebody's throat. [Nothing known of this.]

There's an envelope—long in shape—with stamped monogram or something on the back. It's got G. at the back. [The lady is not known to have used envelopes stamped with a G., but G. is the initial letter of her Christian name.] There's a rather old-fashioned bookcase with glass doors. [R.]: The envelope is there. [The envelopes would have been kept in the bookcase.] This [*i.e.*, the stocking] has been taken off the lady before she died. [R.] It hasn't a laundry association [R.], but was taken off when the lady was not very ill. ["When she was not ill at all" would be correct.] There was an old lady with white hair in the room when the stocking was taken off—not quite white hair, but streaked. [Probably wrong.] There is a chest of drawers in the room with a white cover on. Old-fashioned cover—do you call it Marcella? White, with a pattern all over and a looped fringe.

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<sup>1</sup> In this and subsequent extracts [R.] = Right.

[All references to the bookcase are good; description quite accurate. The room opens into a bathroom—in the bathroom is a chest of drawers with a white fringed cover. This room where the bookcase stands is perhaps the most intimate association that could have been named.]

She wore a twisted brooch. It was like as if it formed a name or figures.

[A glove is given to Mrs. T., who keeps stockings.]

J. G. P.—Can you see the name or figures?

Nelly.—It's like Gertrude. No, it isn't Gertrude. Gertrude was a very great friend of the blue dress girl.

[The lady had a brooch of decorative scroll-work, but none forming a name or figures. But a sister of Miss Clegg states that the description immediately suggested to her this brooch, and that at first sight the scroll-work looks like a name. The lady's name was Gertrude, though Nelly does not say so, but merely says, "Gertrude was a very great friend of the blue dress girl," which was true.]

\* \* \* \* \*

"I associate this glove with a sailor dress, and with the house where the funny bookcase is. [R.] The bookcase nearly comes to the top of the house—I mean, of the room. It's like old-fashioned mahogany, red coloured. [Quite correct.]

"There is some trouble about an examination with the girl in the blue dress."

[J. O. W. had been going over work with the girl for an approaching examination, and he writes that the girl was also "very anxious" about an examination which her brother was going in for in a few months' time.]

[Mrs. T. holds J. O. W.'s hand.] "The blue girl is a relation of the other lady." [R.—cousin.] "The girl with the blue dress came home with a lot of examination papers [true of three months later] and broke something, and there was a fuss about it. [W.] The lady's brother wears glasses. [R.] He is alive. [R.] She has got a Margaret—belonging to that lady." [R.—a cousin, as intimate as a sister would be, who used to live with her.]

"In that room there's one of those chairs that makes a noise when you sit down on it: an old creaky chair." [A very definite and apt reference.] "She has got a dead baby with her."

[J. O. W. was doubtful of this at first, having forgotten that the lady had two sisters who died, one as quite a baby.]

“I’ve got one of mother’s dead babies at our house. Mother doesn’t think it was a little live boy—but it was.”

For the sake of brevity I have omitted many of the more indefinite statements, some true, some false, and some doubtful. But the number and nature of the true statements given above seem beyond the possible scope of chance. No incorrect names were given ; and the two names actually given were precisely appropriate.

Dr. van Eeden had several sittings with Mrs. Thompson in the winter of 1899 and in June, 1900. Dr. van Eeden speaks English well, but would no doubt be recognised as a foreigner, and as his interest in the subject was well known, it cannot be safely assumed that Mrs. Thompson was unaware of the identity of her visitor. Much detailed and correct information was given about himself, his relations, and surroundings generally in his native country, Holland. But the most striking and dramatic communication referred to a young man who had committed suicide ; he had first cut his throat, and had, later, shot himself. Van Eeden brought with him to England an article of clothing that had belonged to this young man. Nobody in the world, he tells us, knew that he had done so.<sup>1</sup> The parcel containing the clothing was introduced at a séance held on June 2nd, Lady X. and Dr. van Eeden being the only sitters.

“Nelly,” on taking the parcel, says :

“I am frightened. I feel as if I want to run away.”

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<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. p. 78.

(To van E.) "That lady won't be cross." (To Lady X.) "Don't go away. I feel rather frightened. What's Marfa, Martha? She's got a lot of people belonging to her."

Van E.—"That's my wife."

Nelly.—"She was not very well. It is better now. She went to lie down [doubtful]. Old gentleman sends his love to Martha. He says: 'My love, Martha.'

"This" (pointing to parcel) "is a much younger gentleman. Very studified, fond of study" [R.].

Van E.—"Why were you frightened?"

Nelly.—"Because something seemed like a shock to me. He's not a rich gentleman. If he lived a bit longer he would have had more. He wanted to make some" [R.].

Van E.—"How do you know?"

Nelly.—"Mrs. Cartwright tells me."

Van E.—"Ask her why you were frightened."

Nelly.—"She says because I was afraid of making faults."

[Obviously wrong.]

"Gentleman used to have headache at the back of his head. He used to take tablets to make his headache go better" [doubtful].

[There were interpolated here some references, unidentified, to a "stout William."]

Van E.—"You have not told me the principal thing about this man" (parcel).

Nelly.—"The principal thing is his sudden death [R.]. I can tell you better when she (Lady X.) is not there. It frightens me. Everybody was frightened, seeming to say, 'Oh, dear! good gracious!' . . .

"This gentleman could shoot. He was rather an out-of-doors man. What a funny hat he used to wear. Round with a cord around. He had a velvet jacket. You have a velvet jacket too, but not real velvet, and like trousers [R.]. But that gentleman had real velvet jacket." [References to dress doubtful.] "I can't see any blood about this gentleman, but a horrible sore place: somebody wiped it all up. It looks black" [the bullet wound probably]. "I am happy because that man is happy now. He was in a state of muddle. And when he realised what he had done, he said it is better to make amends and be happy."

Asked how he made amends, Nelly replied: "When any

people want to kill themselves—he stops their hands from cutting their throats—He’s got such a horror that anybody would do the same thing.” (Then to van Eeden): “You don’t seem to have any whiskers. I don’t see your head properly. Some one covers up your head. He covers up your head to show you how his own head was covered up. Oh, dear! isn’t it funny! You must not cut off your head when you die.” [The suicide’s head was covered up when he was found dead.]

At a séance held three days later Nelly asked again for the parcel, and then continued :

“This person [of the parcel] talks foreign language [R.]. Has got something about the throat” [*i.e.*, the wound resulting from the unsuccessful attempt at suicide], “talks not very distinctly [R.]. He can talk English a bit, but not many [R.]. He is standing before a desk with white knobs on it [doubtful]. He was very disappointed and got depressed and got a headache. Worried much [R.].

“Very friendly, and used to go about a good deal with a tall, fair man, fair complexion.” [He was intimate with a tall, fair man, who in turn committed suicide two days after him.] “They had a good quarrel.” [Probably right.] “I don’t like that fair man. I don’t believe in him, don’t trust him. It was a shock to him [parcel man] to find this out about his friend” [doubtful].

At the sitting of June 7th the young suicide himself purported to take control of Mrs. Thompson’s organism. She spoke hoarsely, and complained on waking of a taste like chloroform in her throat. Van Eeden states that the wound in the throat had been dressed with iodoform. He adds that “during a few minutes—though a few minutes only—I felt absolutely as if I were speaking to my friend himself. I spoke Dutch, and got immediate and correct answers. The expression of satisfaction and gratification in face and gesture, when we seemed to understand each other, was too



true and vivid to be acted" (p. 82). It should be explained that van Eeden's questions in Dutch were apparently understood, since relevant answers were returned, but in English. Many Dutch names and some appropriate Dutch words were, however, given.

It is extremely difficult to apply statistical methods to such discursive and indefinite accounts as the records of trance séances. Mrs. Verrall, however, who had no fewer than 22 sittings with Mrs. Thompson, has made the attempt. She finds that out of 238 definite statements referring to things present or past,<sup>1</sup> 33 were false, 64 were unidentified or have not yet been verified, 141—or 59 per cent.—were recognised as true.

Mrs. Verrall explains that she has only reckoned in this enumeration fairly definite statements, such as that the sitter had a brother and two sisters living, or that a lawyer called Stephens or Stevens was intimate in a certain house, &c. Of the 141 true statements, 51 were such as could have been ascertained from normal sources—*e.g.*, the "Peerage," "Who's Who," and other public records. This leaves 90 cases in which the information could not apparently have been obtained by any normal means. It will be admitted that the number is far too great to be accounted for by lucky chance.<sup>2</sup> There seems, indeed, little doubt that Mrs. Thompson must be placed in the same category as Mrs. Piper, and that the explanation that will eventually be found to fit the facts in the one case must be applied to the other also.

<sup>1</sup> A few predictions were made, but the results were of no value.

<sup>2</sup> Some of Mrs. Verrall's true incidents will be discussed in Chapter VII. below.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SOME RECENT COMMUNICATORS

OF the four men who were instrumental in founding the Society for Psychical Research in 1882—Henry Sidgwick, Edmund Gurney, F. W. H. Myers, and Professor W. F. Barrett—the last named only remains with us. More recently we have lost Richard Hodgson, the only member of the Society who has been enabled to devote his whole life to the work of investigation, and whose knowledge both of the physical phenomena of Spiritualism and of the trance communications through Mrs. Piper was unrivalled. On any theory of the subject we should expect to receive innumerable communications through mediums purporting to come from the spirits of these leaders of psychical research, and as a matter of fact messages have been received, especially since the death of F. W. H. Myers, from many different sources. But it is, of course, peculiarly difficult in the case of persons so well known, and so well known to the workers in this particular field, to find the kind of proof that is desired. When the spirit purporting to communicate is that of the unknown relation of a sitter whose name is concealed, as has been the case in some of the most strikingly successful of Mrs. Piper's séances, any definite statement of facts which are beyond the scope of cunning guess-work may be regarded as *prima facie* evidence of

some supernormal faculty of perception, even if only of telepathy from the mind of the sitter. But we must, of course, assume, in the cases now to be considered, that the main facts of the lives, the chief personal relationships, the published works, and the mental antecedents generally of the communicators are known to the trance intelligence. The region unknown to the medium is very much narrowed, and the opportunities for test questions proportionately reduced. That in the circumstances there is anything in the communications that can be offered as evidence for the identity of these special communicators is the more noteworthy. In the first two cases, it may be said, the evidence amounts to little more than an occasional dramatic appropriateness of speech, or a resemblance in writing. But in the case of Myers and Hodgson some of the communications are more definite and much more impressive.

Edmund Gurney died in the summer of 1888. Shortly after his death communications were received through automatic writing by a lady who was at that time, I believe, personally unacquainted with any of the leading members of the Society for Psychical Research, but who immediately afterwards joined the Society, and took an active part in its work, contributing papers to its *Proceedings*. In the course of the following year communications which purported to come from Gurney were received through Mrs. Piper at a sitting with Professor James. Professor James comments on these communications :

“ It was bad enough, and I confess that the human being in me was so much stronger than the man of science, that I was too disgusted with Phinuit’s tiresome twaddle even to

note it down. When later the phenomena developed into pretended direct speech from Gurney himself, I regretted this, for a completer record would have been useful. I can now merely say that neither then nor at any other time was there, to my mind, the slightest inner verisimilitude in the impersonation.”<sup>1</sup>

During the experiments with Mrs. Piper in this country in the winter of 1889-90 the Gurney control held several conversations with Sir Oliver Lodge. Correct references, as Sir Oliver tells us, were made to private matters personally unknown to him. The fact, however, that the same matters had been previously mentioned in the trance to other sitters who were conversant with the facts deprives their introduction at the séances with Sir Oliver Lodge of its chief value as a proof of spirit identity. The whole manner of the impersonation, however, seems to have been remarkably lifelike. The Gurney control spontaneously recalled having once taken tea with Lady Lodge and having met Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Thompson.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, he professed no recognition of Sir Oliver Lodge's sister, who attended one of the sittings, and whom, as a matter of fact, Edmund Gurney had never met. But there were things in the substance of the communications wholly unlike the real Edmund Gurney. Asked for his opinion on the physical phenomena of Spiritualism, the control said that they were “mostly fraud, the rest electricity”<sup>1</sup> and that some of the Indian juggling tricks were due to “a veil, Lodge, an etherial veil between the thing and the

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 656.

<sup>2</sup> This Mr. and Mrs. Thompson have no connection with the Mrs. Thompson whose mediumship is discussed in the previous chapter.

spectator . . . it's done through ether, it's a gap in ether (?)." <sup>1</sup> These utterances are clearly diagnostic of the intelligence of the trance medium rather than of the author of "Phantasms of the Living."

Again, on his introduction to Miss Lodge, the Gurney control remarked: "Glad to see you. I wrote a little book on 'The Power of Sound.' Did you ever read it? You might by chance be interested in it."

A more uncharacteristic utterance could hardly have been invented.

To some other difficult points in the impersonation reference will be made in the next chapter.

"Edmund Gurney" again communicates occasionally through Mrs. Verrall, and has assumed the general direction of the automatic communications made through another automatist, Mrs. Forbes (assumed name). The impersonations through these two ladies—both of whom knew Edmund Gurney in the flesh—are of a neutral character, and cannot be said to offer any evidence one way or the other. The Gurney control who communicates through Mrs. Holland (assumed name) is of another type. His constant exhortations addressed to the automatist are marked by an impatience and brusquerie, verging on actual discourtesy, which are quite irreconcilable with the demeanour of the Edmund Gurney whom his friends knew. Mrs. Holland, it should be added, did not know him personally.

Communications purporting to come from Professor Sidgwick have been received, amongst others, through Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Verrall. Professor Sidgwick died in the summer of 1900, and in December of

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiii. p. 156.



that year his sister, Mrs. Benson, had several sittings with Mrs. Thompson. No reference at any of these was made to Professor Sidgwick ; but at a sitting held on January 11, 1901, at which Mrs. Benson was not present, the Sidgwick control spoke through Mrs. Thompson. Mr. Piddington, who was present, tells us that the voice, manner, and style of utterance were extraordinarily lifelike, and that he "felt that [he] was indeed speaking with and hearing the voice of the man whom [he] had known."<sup>1</sup> At a later date several sentences were written by the control. The first script was written in Mr. Piddington's presence ; the remaining three while Mrs. Thompson was alone. They bear a very striking, and indeed quite unmistakable, resemblance to the writing of Mr. Henry Sidgwick. Mrs. Thompson states that she had never seen his writing. But, of course, there may have been opportunities for her to see it unconsciously, and we cannot therefore assume her ignorance of the writing.<sup>2</sup> The substance of the communications contained nothing of an evidential nature ; and some of the remarks credited to the Sidgwick control impress one strongly as appropriate to the mind of the medium rather than to the mind purporting to communicate. Such is the sentence addressed to Mr. Piddington, put into the mouth of the Sidgwick control : " You always thought me old and shabby, but I am shabbier now " ;<sup>3</sup> or the remark reported by the Myers control of the Sidgwick control : " He says, ' Myers, now

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xviii. pp. 236—7.

<sup>2</sup> Reproductions of the control writing, with some specimens of Mr. Sidgwick's own writing for comparison, are given in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xviii. p. 237.

we are together, you convince me that I am sending my messages and that she is not getting them from us some way '"; or, again, the statement made by another control about Myers himself: "Do you know he feels like the note-taker, not like the spirit that has to speak"—all these rather cheap witticisms seem to point immediately to the "Nelly" control of Mrs. Thompson as their source.

The Sidgwick communications through Mrs. Verrall's hand are naturally more in character, as coming from one who knew him well in life. But they contain little that can be regarded as throwing light upon the identity of the communicator. Several remarks were made about an old MS. connected with children, and on reference to Mrs. Sidgwick it was found that she had recently come across a play, written in 1856 for some children, one of whom was a friend of Henry Sidgwick's.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, repeated references were made to three letters of which Mrs. Sidgwick knows nothing; and the control failed to answer a test question. Mrs. Verrall was asked to request the control to state the text which (as stated in the "Memoir," then not yet published) represented the dominant thought in the last part of Dr. Sidgwick's life. Many attempts were made, but all incorrect.<sup>3</sup>

Communications purporting to come from the late F. W. H. Myers, who died on January 17, 1901, have been received through many automatists. The only cases, however, which it will be necessary to consider

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiii. pp. 201—202.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xx. p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xx. pp. 296—7.

in the present connection are those made through Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Verrall, and Mrs. Holland, which have offered some opportunities for testing the genuineness of the impersonation.

As regards Mrs. Holland, I see no reason to question that the "Myers," who shares with "Gurney" the general direction of this lady's automatic writing, is the creature of her own subconscious intelligence, owing nothing to any external inspiration. Miss Alice Johnson, who has edited Mrs. Holland's script,<sup>1</sup> has pointed out many instances in which these automatic impersonations have clearly owed characteristic details to information recently acquired by the normal self from books and newspaper articles. The most striking proof of the artificial character of this personality is afforded by the following incident: In October, 1905, Mrs. Holland read in the *Spectator* a review of Maxwell's book dealing with the physical phenomena of Spiritualism. The book had a preface written by Sir Oliver Lodge. In the same month Sir Oliver Lodge described at a meeting of the Society some phenomena which he had witnessed, at Dr. Maxwell's invitation, at Bordeaux. Mr. Feilding also was at this time planning to attend some séances with Eusapia Palladino in Paris, and had discussed the phenomena with Miss Johnson.

Mrs. Holland's script of November and December was full of impressive and repeated warnings purporting to come from Myers against fraudulent spiritualistic manifestations. Thus: "The phenomena that will shortly be introduced are utterly misleading . . . the old familiar trickery." Again, after a reference to

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi.

Eusapia Palladino by name: "The trance condition is partially genuine; the manifestations are simply fraudulent." Definite statements are then made as to the use by Eusapia of feet, toes, and lazy-tongs, and the message is written: "The kind of ridicule this would bring would be the killing type. Has [*sic*] we endured so long—done so much, endured so much, hoped so much, only to come to an end in the course of the year now coming—— It is a very sad thought to me." The last sentence is obviously intended to foreshadow the probable collapse of the Society for Psychical Research through the discredit brought on it by its attitude towards physical mediums, and Eusapia in particular.<sup>1</sup>

Now, the living Myers, as already shown, had some years before his death formally recanted his suspicions and announced his conviction of the genuineness of Eusapia's phenomena. That his attitude towards the whole subject had not changed in his lifetime is sufficiently proved by the views expressed in his book on "Human Personality." The apprehensions shown in Mrs. Holland's script are, therefore, entirely foreign to the views held by F. W. H. Myers when alive. If he had changed them since his death, he would, no doubt—since the problem affects the authenticity of the controls, not only of Mrs. Holland, but of Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Piper as well—have thought it necessary to explain the change through these or other sources. The circumstance, again, points immediately to Mrs. Holland's subconscious mind as the sole source of these messages.

Mrs. Verrall developed the faculty of automatic

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. pp. 273—8.

writing shortly after Myers' death, and amongst the communications received from him were some that purported to reveal the contents of a sealed letter which Myers had written in 1891 for the express purpose of such a test, and had left in the care of Sir Oliver Lodge. The sealed letter was opened on December 13, 1904, but it was found that the contents bore no resemblance to the statements made in Mrs. Verrall's script.

In January, 1907, Mrs. Sidgwick propounded to the Piper-Myers a test question of which she alone knew the answer. In order as far as possible to exclude the operation of telepathy, the question was put by Mrs. Verrall, Mrs. Sidgwick herself not interviewing Mrs. Piper until later. Briefly, at one of Myers' last meetings with Professor Henry Sidgwick, he had called Mrs. Sidgwick aside and urged her to induce Mr. Arthur Sidgwick to write a Memoir of his brother.<sup>1</sup> Other matters were also referred to. The Piper-Myers was asked to state the subject of the conversation. Mrs. Verrall knew only that the conversation had taken place out of doors in the porch. In the presence of Mrs. Verrall and Mr. Piddington the Piper-Myers, through the hand of the entranced Mrs. Piper, stated correctly that the conversation had taken place out of doors, though he gave the locality incorrectly as near some shrubbery. After some vague and general remarks natural to the circumstances, the following definite statements were made about the subject of the conversation: That it referred to Professor Sidgwick's

<sup>1</sup> The Memoir was afterwards written by Mrs. H. Sidgwick and Mr. Arthur Sidgwick jointly, and had been published before the test had been propounded.



writing a letter [(for the purpose of a test) ; that it related to the posthumous publication of some book of his ; that it referred to " a certain document " ; to some " matter pertaining to the College " ; to " a library matter "—later expanded into the Gurney Memorial Library. After this Mrs. Sidgwick herself attended the séances with Mrs. Piper. Reference was again made on February 13th to the Library and to the document. On February 20th the Library was again referred to. On March 20th the Myers' control wrote : " I recall very clearly speaking with you about a will." Later in the same sitting the message came :

" Let me ask if you remember . . . my advising you, to see about—see [illegible scrawl here] about his life."

E. M. S.—" My advising you to see? "

[Rector communicating.]

" I can't tell you just what the word is. It sounds like R-e-v-n-u-a of his life."

E. M. S.—" R-e-u-n-u-a—is that it? "

[Myers communicating.]

" Yes, it was to write it."

Mrs. Sidgwick then acknowledged the correctness of the statement so far, but pointed out that something else had been said in the conversation referred to.

The Piper-Myers returned to the question at later séances, but still harped on the point of having asked Mrs. Sidgwick to write the Life, and made various guesses at the further question asked.

Then on April 2nd, after having stated (correctly) that Myers wanted the Life written, but was too busy to undertake it himself, the trance intelligence continued :

" Now, dear friend, let me refer again to the book. I remember I asked you to try, and do you remember copy-

right, and bring out the work that it should not fall into other hands. I felt it was your work alone, and the exact words I pointed were, I believe, like this—I had [?] unless you take certain [?] on this point they would lose their value. Am I not correct?"

E. M. S.—“I do not think you referred to copyright.”

Control.—“I do not intend to say copyright, only copies. Rector does not understand my point. I will explain. Do you remember my suggesting to you about views [?] photographs which I thought would be necessary? and I think I suggested Arthur. Do you remember about Arthur and what I said about his giving anything [?] to assist assisting you?”

At the next sitting there was a further reference to “Arthur”—*i.e.*, Mr. Arthur Sidgwick.

It will be seen that only one piece of correct information, and that known to Mrs. Verrall, was given before Mrs. Sidgwick came to the séances. After she came and after several incorrect guesses had been made, and the field thus narrowed down, the answer—correct so far as it went—was given that the conversation related to the writing of a Life of Professor Sidgwick. But Mr. Arthur Sidgwick only came in as assisting Mrs. Sidgwick, which, in fact, he had done.

Mrs. Sidgwick thinks that the statements made by the trance intelligence were not such as Mrs. Piper would have been likely to guess, and that on the whole they seem to indicate some supernormal source of information. But it leaves the question open as between telepathy and communication from the dead.<sup>1</sup>

Several other opportunities for testing the Piper-Myers occurred in the course of Mrs. Piper's visit to this country in 1906-07. Two of them, the Greek sentence selected by Mrs. Verrall and the Latin

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxii. pp. 417—44.

message, are involved with the general question of cross-correspondences, and can most conveniently be dealt with in the next chapter, to which the reader is referred. Another case, which furnished the most striking test in the whole series, the *Lethe* incident, is discussed in Chapter VI. But at the séance of January 23, 1907, at which the question about the Greek phrase was put to the Myers control by Mr. Piddington, the question was also asked: "Which ode of Horace entered deeply into your inner life?" The answer desired was a reference to Odes I. 28, the Archytas Ode, which Myers had himself described in a letter written in 1884 in the words quoted in the question. Several references to Horace and many to poems were made at subsequent sittings; but a definite reply was not given until April 17th. Mrs. Sidgwick then reminded the Piper-Myers of his promise, and he answered: "I recall the question and I had the 'Ode to Nature' on my mind, but as I thought I loved another ode better, I did not reply until I could say it more clearly. Do you remember immortality?"<sup>1</sup>

It happens that Myers' posthumous "Fragments of Prose and Poetry," include an "Ode to Nature" and a poem on "Immortality." Both contain some similarities of thought and expression, too marked, it would seem, to be accidental, with two well-known odes of Horace (Odes III. 4 and I. 28, the Archytas Ode). Mrs. Piper states (pp. 109-10) that she had not at this date seen the "Fragments." Her knowledge of the book, however, in this connection is immaterial, since her reading of it would not have enabled her to connect any passage in it with Horace.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxii. p. 398.

But Mrs. Verrall, who suggested the question, had seen the "Fragments" two or three years before, and had at that time (October, 1904) read the poem on "Immortality." It does not appear that she consciously connected the poem with the Archytas Ode, nor that she read the "Ode to Nature." Had she done so, she could hardly have failed to recognise the Horatian allusions in it. In the circumstances it would not be reasonable, in view of the frequent telepathic interchanges which appear to have taken place between Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Piper, to exclude the possibility that the knowledge of the titles of the two poems shown by the latter may have been derived from the mind, if even the unconscious mind, of the former.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Hodgson was born in Melbourne. He left Australia to come to this country in 1878, and lived here until 1887, when he went to America to act as Secretary to the American Branch of the Society for Psychical Research, remaining there, with brief intervals, until his death in December, 1905.

What appears to have been the earliest communication from a Hodgson control in this country came through Mrs. Holland.<sup>2</sup> Though Mrs. Holland had produced automatic writing occasionally for some years previously, her systematic pursuit of the practice dates only from September, 1903. Almost from the outset her automatism purported to be controlled by Edmund

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Piddington's further discussion of the incident in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. pp. 150—69. I do not find that his argument, ingenious, subtle, and scholarly though it is, carries much weight to my own mind. But this is a question to be decided almost entirely by the personal equation. Let the reader judge for himself.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. p. 304.

Gurney or F. W. H. Myers. But, as already said, there is nothing either in the substance of the communications or the manner of them which should lead us to attribute them to any other agency than the subliminal consciousness of the writer.

Mrs. Holland is generally awake or in apparent possession of her normal faculties while practising automatic writing. In February, 1905, she had found a tendency to drowsiness during the process which she had successfully resisted. Early in the following year she found the drowsiness coming again, and in sending to Miss Johnson some script, written on February 9, 1906, she stated that she had felt very sleepy. It should be mentioned that Mrs. Holland had a few days previously seen a newspaper paragraph giving the fact of Dr. Hodgson's death, but without details. The writing was as follows :

*Friday, Feb. 9, 1906. 9 p.m.*

" S j d i b s e I p e h t p o—only one letter farther on.

18	8
9	15
3	4
8	7
1	19
18	15
4	14

" They are not haphazard figures ; read them as letters.

" The shortness of breath was the worst part of the illness—worse even than the exhaustion.

" K. 57. (A Christian name)—grey paper.

[Then come references, unidentified, to some document.]

" It is a wide prospect from the window. A gold watch-chain with a horse-shoe shaped cigar-cutter attached to it—an old seal, not his own initials—a white-handled knife ink-stained.



“Nitrate of amyl—probably too late even if it had been thought of—a corpse needs no shoes.”<sup>1</sup>

The reference to Richard Hodgson, whom Mrs. Holland had never met, is clear. Sjdibse Ipehtpo are “only one letter farther on,” and the two columns of figures give the numerical order in the alphabet of the letters forming the two names. Hodgson died suddenly of heart failure whilst playing at hand-ball, so that the reference to illness and shortness of breath are inaccurate. He wore a gold watch-chain, with cigar-cutter attached—but it was not horse-shoe shaped. An old broken seal was found amongst his possessions, but there were no initials on it. *Nitrite* of amyl is used for heart failure. There are, however, three points which specially connect the script with Hodgson.

1. The device of giving a name by means of conundrums is extremely characteristic. Hodgson was extraordinarily fond of anagrams and puzzles of all kinds. It appears, however, that Mrs. Holland had as a child played at a secret language by using letters of the alphabet in the same way, though she cannot recall ever having used numbers for the purpose.

2. The suppressed Christian name was that of a lady, dead so far back as 1879, who had played a large part in Hodgson's life. The name had been mentioned at a sitting with Mrs. Piper, but never published, and it seems impossible that Mrs. Holland should have known of it by normal means.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. p. 304.

<sup>2</sup> The name, however, is a fairly common one, and the actual termination “sie” had been published in the *Proceedings S.P.R.* But Mrs. Holland had not read the *Proceedings*.

3. K. 57.

A copy of the script was sent to Mr. Piddington, at the time in Boston, helping to arrange Dr. Hodgson's papers. On the same morning that he received it Mr. Piddington found in a notebook of Hodgson's the following entries :

R. H.	R. H.	Mr. (or Mrs.) C.
1	K. 6	8
4	K. 52	14
6	K. 8	2
3	3	7
4	K. 36	7
52	K. 6	7
K. 11	K. 7	10
K. 52	K. 52	
10	K. 13	
K. 30	7	
	3	

No explanation of the figures is forthcoming. But they present a curious resemblance to the K. 57 and lines of figures in Mrs. Holland's script.

One or two other references to Hodgson, but of little evidential value, are found in Mrs. Holland's script.

Naturally, however, the Hodgson control has been most active in Mrs. Piper's trance, sharing, in this country at any rate, with the Myers control the bulk of the work of communicating. The Piper-Hodgson in this country, however, has given no satisfactory proofs of identity. Sir Oliver Lodge, whose testimony to the Gurney control has been already quoted, finds very little feeling of reality in connection with the Myers and Hodgson controls. "They seemed in my case," he writes, "rather shadowy and, so to speak,

uninteresting communicators." <sup>1</sup> Four intimate friends of Hodgson's were introduced at various times (of course, under assumed names), and had in all twelve sittings with the entranced Mrs. Piper. But no satisfactory evidence even for recognition was forthcoming, though some of the sittings were by no means unproductive in other respects.<sup>2</sup>

In marked contrast the Piper-Hodgson in America seems to have been one of the most lifelike and dramatic impersonations of the whole series given through Mrs. Piper, and many true and relevant statements were made of an intimate kind such as could scarcely have proceeded from Mrs. Piper herself. Of course Hodgson was well known to Mrs. Piper in her normal state, and had, further, been present at her trance sittings for many years, and was on intimate terms, so to speak, with her controls. There were thus several channels through which it is possible some of the information given might have reached Mrs. Piper, and, in fact, as will be shown, two or three incidents which at first sight seemed of an almost crucial character were robbed of their chief evidential value by the later discovery that some of the facts had at one time been within the knowledge of the trance intelligence. But when all deductions are made, the impersonation remains a very remarkable one.

The Hodgson control first appeared at a sitting held on December 28, 1905, eight days after his death. The sitter, Miss Theodate Pope, had been a friend of his. Rector (the controlling spirit)<sup>3</sup> described

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiii. p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> For some account of Rector see Chapter VII.

Hodgson as holding a ring and showing it to the sitter, and then wrote "Margaret a ll B. L."

At the next sitting, early in January, the Piper-Hodgson gave eight lines of rhythmical and passably melodious verse, which he claimed as original. Hodgson in his lifetime had been an omnivorous reader and an enthusiastic lover of poetry.

On January 16th, at another sitting with Miss Pope, the Hodgson control wrote :

Give ring to Margaret back to Margaret.

Miss P.—Who is Margaret?

I was with her in the summer.

[Hodgson had spent two summers at the house of Miss Margaret Bancroft.]

On January 24th the actual donor of the ring, Mrs. Lyman (assumed name), whose Christian name is not Margaret, had her first sitting. As soon as the Hodgson control came on the scene he wrote :

The ring. You gave it me on my fiftieth birthday. When they asked I didn't want to say you gave it me, I didn't want to say that. . . . Two palm-leaves joining each other—Greek. [Here followed illegible word. The palms truly described the ring, which Mrs. Piper probably had seen; but it bore no Greek inscription, nor was the symbol on it a Greek cross.] You gave it me—

Mrs. L.—Yes, Dick, where is it now?

They have got it. They took it off my finger after I was gone.

Mrs. L.—No, they didn't find it on your finger.

Pocket, it was in my pocket, I'll find it you shall have it.

On January 29th Mrs. L. had another sitting. The Hodgson control wrote :

I have been trying to make clear about that ring. It is on my mind all the time. I thought if I could get Margaret B. to get it for me, I would get it to you through her, then no one would understand. I could not tell Miss Pope about you.

Mrs. L.—Did you think Margaret B. gave it to you?

Oh dear no ! not at all.

Mrs. Lyman asked for the motto on the ring to be given, but the control replied : “ All will be clear to me in time. Do not ask me test questions now.”

On March 5th the Hodgson control was again questioned as to the whereabouts of the ring, which had not been found. He replied, first, that a man had taken it from his finger ; next, twice, that he could recall putting it in his waistcoat pocket before beginning to play ball. (As already stated, he died whilst playing a game of hand-ball.) On May 16th he stated that he saw it taken from his locker by a man, of whom he gave a description ; he further described the house where the man lived. As a matter of fact the ring was ultimately found in the pocket of Hodgson's waistcoat, which had remained at the house of a personal friend, Mr. Dorr. The description of the man was but little like that of Mr. Dorr, and the description of the house did not accord with the facts.

The interpretation of this incident, as Professor James has pointed out, is ambiguous. It is consistent either with the theory of fishing and general cunning on the part of the trance intelligence playing a new part, or with the theory of a living Hodgson, still half-mazed by the great change and without full control of his reason or his memories.



*The Nigger Talk Incident.*

On February 27, 1906, at a sitting with Professor Hyslop, the following dialogue took place :

R. H.—I wonder if you recall what I said I would do if I should return first?

Hyslop.—I do not remember exactly.

Remember that I told Myers that we would talk nigger-talk—Myers—talk nigger-talk?

Hyslop.—No, you must have told that to some one else.

Ah yes, James. I remember it was James, yes, Will James. He will understand.

In fact, Professor James recalled that he had more than once remarked to Hodgson that the pompous "sacerdotal verbiage" of the Emperor Group could by tactful suggestion be turned into nigger minstrel talk. The incident seemed at first a very striking one. But it was eventually discovered that Hodgson in his lifetime had made use of the same phrase—nigger-talk—in speaking to the Myers control of Mrs. Piper. So that the incident, however dramatically appropriate, cannot be held as otherwise significant.

Another series of communications, at first sight extremely impressive, proved on investigation to lose much of their value for similar reasons.

At a sitting held on May 2, 1906, the Hodgson control asked Mr. Piddington to look among his papers for some letters from Chicago written by a Miss Huldah Densmore (surname a pseudonym), adding that he would be much distressed if they fell into other hands.

The letters could not be found, and at a later sitting, in reply to a question from Mr. Dorr, who knew a family named Densmore : "Is she a sister of Mary,

Jenny, and Ella?" the control replied: "Ella is the one, Huldah we used to call her."

At another sitting, being asked whether she was the same person as Ella, the control replied that she was not Ella, but another sister (in fact, *she was Ella*), and that he had proposed marriage to her.

Miss Ella Hannah Densmore admitted that, in fact, Hodgson had proposed to her some years since. It appears that the only friends to whom Hodgson had mentioned the circumstance were Professor Newbold and Mrs. Thaw, neither of whom had been present at the sittings when the matter was referred to,<sup>1</sup> and the episode had not been even suspected by Hodgson's other friends. Further investigation, however, showed that Hodgson at the time of his disappointment had consulted Mrs. Piper's trance controls, so that the circumstances were known to them.

Later, when Professor James asked the Hodgson control why he gave the lady's name as Huldah, he replied: "I used that name instead of the right Christian name to avoid compromising—it was a very delicate matter."

It will be remembered that he had given the *surname* correctly.

On the other hand, the Hodgson control gave to Mr. Dorr and to Miss Margaret Bancroft, at whose country houses he had often been a summer guest, many correct details about persons and incidents connected with these two places. Mrs. Piper had not been to either house, and the details mentioned are the kind of trivial intimate things which Hodgson,

<sup>1</sup> At later sittings the Hodgson control spontaneously indicated these two friends as knowing about the matter.

always reticent, as Professor James points out, would be most unlikely to have mentioned to her. But the incidents, so far as they could be verified, were within the knowledge, if not always within the immediate consciousness, of the sitter.

The following are some of the most striking cases quoted in Professor James's report :

1. At a time of some pecuniary embarrassment a friend had unsolicited sent Hodgson some money. In writing to thank him Hodgson had

cited the story of a starving couple who were overheard by an atheist who was passing the house to pray aloud to God for food. The atheist climbed the roof and dropped some bread down the chimney, and heard them thank God for the miracle. He then went to the door and revealed himself as its author. The old woman replied to him : "Well, the Lord sent it, even if the devil brought it."

At this friend's sitting of January 30th, R. H. suddenly says :

Do you remember a story I told you and how you laughed, about the man and woman praying.

Sitter.—Oh, and the devil was in it. Of course I do.

Yes, the devil, they told him it was the Lord who sent it if the devil brought it. . . . About the food that was given to them. . . . I want you to know who is speaking.

The sitter feels quite certain that no one but himself knew of the correspondence, and regards the incident as a good test of R. H.'s continued presence. Others will either favour this interpretation of it or explain it by reading of the sitter's mind, or treat it as a chance coincidence, according to their several prepossessions. I myself, [says Professor James,] feel morally certain that the waking Mrs. Piper was ignorant of the incident and of the correspondence.

2. At a sitting on May 21, 1906, Professor James asked the Hodgson control whether he could recall

any incident about playing with children at the Putnam camp. The control replied :

Do you remember—what is that name, Elizabeth Putnam? She came in and I was sitting in a chair before the fire, reading, and she came in and put her hands, crept up behind me, put her hands over my eyes, and said, “Who is it?” And do you remember what my answer was?

W. J.—Let me see if *you* remember it as I do.

I said, “Well, it feels like Elizabeth Putnam, but it sounds like—

W. J.—I know who you mean. [R. H. quite startled me here, because what he said reminded me of an incident which I well remembered. One day at breakfast little Martha Putnam (as I recall the fact) had climbed on Hodgson’s back, sitting on his shoulders, and clasped her hands over his eyes, saying, “Who am I?” To which R. H., laughing, had responded, “It sounds like Martha, but it feels like Henry Bowditch”—the said H. B. weighing nearly 200 lbs. I find that no one but myself, of those who probably were present, remembers this incident.—W. J.]

Do you realise how difficult that is?

W. J.—It is, evidently; yet you were just on the point of saying it. Is it a man or a woman?

A man.

W. J.—Have you any message for that man now?

Dr.—not Putnam—Dr. Bowditch!

W. J.—That is it—Bowditch.

“Sounds like Dr. Bowditch.”

3. At another time Mrs. James asked the control whether he could remember what happened one night when he was arguing with her sister :

“I had hardly said ‘remember,’” she notes, “in asking this question, when the medium’s arm was stretched out and the fist shaken threateningly.” Then these words came :

R. H.—Yes, I did this in her face. I couldn't help it. She was so impossible to move. It was wrong of me, but I couldn't help it.

[I myself well remember this fist-shaking incident, and how we others laughed over it after Hodgson had taken his leave. What had made him so angry was my sister-in-law's defence of some slate-writing she had seen in California.—W. J.]

On January 30, 1906, within six weeks of the death, Mrs. M. had a sitting. Mrs. M. said :

Do you remember our last talk together, at N., and how, in coming home, we talked about the work?

(R. H.)—Yes, yes.

Mrs. M.—And I said if we had a hundred thousand dollars——

Buying Billy !!

Mrs. M.—Yes, Dick, that was it—"buying Billy."

Buying only Billy?

Mrs. M.—Oh, no—I wanted Schiller too. How well you remember !

Mrs. M., before R. H.'s death, had had dreams of extending the American Branch's operations by getting an endowment, and possibly inducing Professor Newbold (Billy) and Dr. Schiller to co-operate in work. She naturally regards this veridical recall, by the control, of a private conversation she had had with Hodgson as very evidential of his survival.

Taken as a whole, the correspondences are so numerous and precise, and the possibility of leakage to Mrs. Piper through normal channels in many cases so effectually excluded, that it is impossible to doubt that we have here proof of a supernormal agency of some kind—either telepathy by the trance intelligence from the sitter or some kind of communication with the dead.



The ring, the nigger-talk, and the Huldah Densmore incident seem to be adequately accounted for by telepathy, eked out now by cunning conjecture, now by unconscious reminiscences.

Nor are the probabilities greatly strained by the application of the same explanation to most of the other successful sittings, if we assume that telepathy can draw upon the stores of the unconscious mind. But the four incidents last quoted must give us pause. It is not merely that the information given is correct, and such as could scarcely have been within the normal knowledge of Mrs. Piper ; the manner of its introduction is so like Hodgson and so unlike anything that we can attribute to the medium's mind.

But these dramatically true incidents are diluted with a very large amount of inferior matter. The Hodgson control makes many incorrect statements, and endeavours to conceal his mistakes by apparently disingenuous evasions. We have already had occasion to note two instances of this—the mention of Margaret in connection with the ring, and the curious statement that Miss Densmore's Christian name was inaccurately given out of delicacy, notwithstanding the fact that the true surname was given from the outset. It is noteworthy, too, that no test questions are answered. Hodgson left behind him many private papers written in cipher. The key to the cipher is unknown to any one now living. The Hodgson control has promised to reveal it, but he has not yet done so. He was unable to give the solution to two charades of his own composition [(p. 54)]. When asked to give the names of some of Professor Newbold's deceased relatives, whom the control professed to know, the trance intelligence imme-

diately changed the subject (p. 76). When asked to give the contents of any sealed letters written in his lifetime for the express purpose of being read by him after death the two sentences were given: "There is no death" and "out of life into life eternal" (p. 102). Whatever Hodgson may have written, it was surely not quite so commonplace as that.

Hodgson, as already stated, had passed his childhood and youth in Melbourne. This circumstance afforded a good opportunity for a test, seeing that incidents of his early years would be known to no one in America. He made many statements about his childhood, some true, some false, many unverified. His sister, to whom all the messages were sent, wrote: "To my mind there is nothing striking in any of the statements." She propounded in turn three test questions, to which the trance intelligence gave no reply. Moreover, the Piper-Hodgson, when questioned by a sitter, could not remember the name of his schoolmaster in Melbourne. We have seen already that the Piper-Hodgson failed in England even to recognise some of his intimate friends.

If we could suppose that sometimes the real Hodgson communicated through the medium's hand, and that sometimes, more often, when he was inaccessible, the medium's secondary personality played the part as best it could, these difficulties would, no doubt, be lessened.

It may be justifiable, as a guide to further investigation, provisionally to entertain such an hypothesis; but it seems hardly necessary to say that at this stage, at any rate, it cannot be seriously defended.

## CHAPTER V

### CROSS CORRESPONDENCES

IT will be seen that the problem of proving the authenticity of the alleged communications from the dead is by no means a simple one. For how are we to get behind the secondary personality of the medium? We cannot rely, as evidence for personal identity, on a repetition of characteristic gestures, the choice of a word, or the turn of a phrase. We are forced to remember at every step that we have to deal with an actor whose mimicry is as subtle as it is unscrupulous. Again, we cannot base our faith on the relation of intimate details known to no one but ourselves and the dead, for we can place no certain limits on the mysterious agency of telepathy. The only evidence that can satisfy us of the survival of an active and individual intelligence is evidence of the present activity of such an intelligence. Within the last few years some grounds have appeared for hoping that traces of such intelligent action had been found.

Several indications of what appeared to be a reciprocal influence with other automatists were noted some years back in connection with Mrs. Thompson. Thus, on several occasions in the early months of 1900 there appeared to be some correspondence between the dreams of Dr. van Eeden in Holland and Nelly's statements about him. The most striking case is as

follows : Mr. Piddington records that séances were held with Mrs. Thompson on January 10th, 12th, 16th, and 18th. No reference was made to Dr. van Eeden on the first three occasions, but on the 18th Nelly said, in reply to a question, that she had not seen Dr. van Eeden, but that he had called her twice, and that her spirit friend Elsie had said to her : “ Old Whiskers in the bed is calling you.”

Now, it appears from Dr. van Eeden’s diary that on the night of the 15th he had before going to bed resolved to dream of Nelly—he has the power of inducing dreams on a subject chosen by himself—and as a test to give her the name Walden. In the event he found himself calling out in his dream, “ Elsie, Elsie ! ” then, remembering that this was wrong, he changed it to “ Nelly, Nelly.” It is, of course, not impossible that Dr. van Eeden may have known the name of Nelly’s spirit associate, though it was new to Mr. Piddington. But the coincidence is certainly curious.<sup>1</sup>

Other correspondences occurred between Mrs. Thompson’s utterances and those of Miss Rawson (vol. xviii. pp. 206 and 295) and Mrs. Scott (*ibid.*, p. 302).

In recording these correspondences Mr. Piddington writes :

“ The resemblances quoted above are far from complete ; they are suggestive, rather than indicative, of supernormal agency, yet I cannot ascribe them to chance. If they are not supernormal I would attribute them to the minds of both automatists having developed from similar data in their common possession similar phantasies concordant with the

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. p. 113.

general trend of ideas that run through spiritualistic manifestations. But at least I claim for them serious study, for should we be fortunate enough (and I am rather sanguine that we may be) to multiply analogous and more clinching instances of the same phenomenon, it would open up one of the most promising lines for observation, and even perhaps for experimentation.”<sup>1</sup>

These words, published in 1903, have now received abundant fulfilment. Since 1901 especially several members of the S. P. R.—Mrs. Verrall, Mrs. Holland, Mrs. Forbes, and others—have practised automatic writing with success. The scripts, independently produced by these ladies in different parts of the world, have been regularly sent to the office of the Society and carefully collated. It was soon found that these writings showed traces of reciprocal influence, coincidences of thought and expression, too numerous and too precise to be ascribed wholly to the chance association of ideas. Mrs. Holland’s script, for instance, contained several veridical references to Mrs. Verrall’s occupations and surroundings, even before she had made that lady’s acquaintance.

It is impossible fairly to estimate the value of these cross-correspondences without a close study of the nature and development of the automatic script. Our space will not, however, admit of more than a brief description of the phenomenon in the case of Mrs. Holland. This lady had occasionally since 1893 written automatic poetry, and her hand had on three or four occasions been impelled to write letters to an acquaintance purporting to be dictated by a deceased friend. Some at least of the messages so sent through her hand appear to have been recognised as containing

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. p. 307.



references to matters known only to the recipient of the letter and to the deceased communicator. In the course of 1903 Mrs. Holland read Myers' "Human Personality," and from that date onward her automatic writing came fluently under the ostensible direction of Myers and Gurney. The messages contained, however, little of an evidential nature, and Miss Johnson has traced stage by stage how the impersonations grew more definite as Mrs. Holland's opportunities for acquiring knowledge from normal sources increased. Her first vision of the two controls, for instance, came shortly after she had glanced through Myers' posthumous "Fragments of Prose and Poetry," which contains photographs of himself, Gurney, and Sidgwick. It is noteworthy that even after having seen his portrait Mrs. Holland's vision of Professor Sidgwick was incorrect in two important particulars. Many other references in Mrs. Holland's automatic writing to matters connected with prominent workers in psychical research were apparently inspired by articles in the newspapers and other outside sources. Intermixed with these were apparent instances of telepathy, chiefly concerned with Mrs. Verrall. Some of these veridical references occurred at a time when Mrs. Holland knew nothing of Mrs. Verrall beyond the fact that her name is mentioned in Myers' "Human Personality." Later, Miss Johnson arranged that the two ladies should sit on fixed days for experiment, neither being told the name of her partner in the experiment. Indications of reciprocal influence appeared in each script. The experiments were continued after the ladies had become acquainted with each other. To give an idea of these apparently telepathic references I will quote the rele-

vant passages of the script of March 21, 1906. Mrs. Holland on that day was wearing a ring belonging to Mrs. Verrall, who at the time was staying with Mrs. Forbes. Mrs. Holland did not know Mrs. Forbes, and did not know that Mrs. Verrall was staying with her. Omitting three paragraphs referring to matters within Mrs. Holland's normal knowledge, the script runs :

1. They have all been trying in turn, but some of them are not serious. Margaret [Mrs. Verrall] and Helen [Miss Verrall] are.—M. saw a real place that last time, but she has never seen the place itself, and did not describe it very clearly.

2. Two windows in the room, one very much smaller than the other.—Yes, you can see the river.

3. The honeysuckle is all right, but the Jap passion-flower died in the frost.

4. Frank paid a heavy price.—Daisy?

[Here the script broke into verse, which had no reference to Mrs. Verrall and her surroundings.]

5. [Drawing of a dagger.] There is gold inlay on the blade—the hilt is very worn. It's in the hall—he forgets where it came from—but its story is clearly impressed upon it. Get it pschometrised [*sic*], E. P. even would not fail.

6. Button—button—whose got the button? Look under the carpet. The  $\diamond$  went out of doors, and she won't find it again.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

7. F [?] *a pair of scales.*

Then follows the figure of a horoscope with the symbol of Cancer (incorrectly drawn), Venus, the Sun and Moon. Then another figure which apparently represents a further attempt to draw a horoscope, and a reference to an amphora on the mantelpiece.

There are several possibly, or probably, veridical references in this script.

1. On the same day Mrs. Verrall's script contained allusions to "Massiliotes terragenæ olives old and hoary—Posilippo, a terrace there—blue sea beyond the marble balustrade." Mrs. Verrall had never seen Posilippo.

2. There are two windows in Mrs. Forbes' drawing-room, one a large bow, the other a small one—there is a stream in the garden which can be seen from one of these windows. It was in this room that Mrs. Forbes and Mrs. Verrall did planchette writing together.

3. Mrs. Forbes writes (April 8, 1906): "There is honeysuckle outside the window on the house, and there was a *Pirus Japonica*, but all except a small shoot has died. No passion-flowers."

4. "Frank" is Mr. Forbes' name; but the statements made seem to have no relevance.

5. On this day, March 21st, Mrs. Forbes had brought into the room to show Mrs. Verrall an inlaid dagger, part of it much worn.

6. Possibly refers to a game Mrs. Forbes and Mrs. Verrall used to play with a dog—hiding things for him to find.

7. Many years ago Mr. Forbes used to be much interested in drawing nativities.

It will be seen that, speaking generally, the verifiable references in this script are of a fairly simple and straightforward kind, and this comparative simplicity may be said to be characteristic of Mrs. Holland. Her writing shows fluency, and is frequently embellished with poetic imagery, or actual quotations in verse. To a reader it gives the impression of flowing without impediment. It deals little in riddles.

Mrs. Verrall's utterances, on the other hand, are extremely difficult of interpretation. It is not merely that a large part of them is written in Latin or, less commonly, Greek, but that the Latin and Greek sentences themselves frequently contain new coinages, and are nearly always of ambiguous application. Her English utterances are hardly less broken, allusive,

and enigmatic. The cross-correspondences with other automatists are most numerous and most striking in Mrs. Verrall's script. Two early examples may be given. In December, 1900, Mrs. Verrall had made the acquaintance of the lady known as Mrs. Forbes (the name is assumed), and their respective scripts during the next three or four months contain two or three vague and not specially striking allusions to each other. On April 16, 1901, Mrs. Verrall had a letter from Mrs. Forbes, but did not see her or hear from her again until October of that year. In the interval, however, her script contained an unmistakable allusion, not recognised until later, to Mrs. Forbes' concerns. Mrs. Forbes had lost a son, Talbot, in the Boer War, and this son was one of the chief controls purporting to communicate through her hand. On August 28, 1901, Mrs. Verrall's hand wrote :

*Signa sigillo. Conifera arbor in horto iam insita omina sibimet ostendit*—"Sign with the seal. The fir-tree that has already been planted in the garden gives its own portent."

"The script," Mrs. Verrall writes, "was signed with a scrawl and three drawings representing a sword, a suspended bugle, and a pair of scissors; thus :



"A suspended bugle surmounted by a crown is the badge of the regiment to which Talbot Forbes belonged. Mrs. Forbes has in her garden four or five small fir-trees grown

from seed sent to her from abroad by her son ; these are called by her 'Talbot's trees.' This fact was entirely unknown to me. On August 28th Mrs. Forbes' script contained the statement, purporting to come from her son, that he was looking for a 'sensitive' who wrote automatically, in order that he might obtain corroboration for her own writing, and it concluded with the remark that he must now leave her in order to join E. G. in controlling the sensitive. The hour of her writing on August 28th does not appear, but as she usually writes early in the day, and as mine of the same date was 10.30 p.m., it is probable that hers preceded mine.

"It thus appears that on a certain day Talbot Forbes in Mrs. Forbes' script declared that he was seeking, and implied that he had found, another automatic writer through whom to communicate with her. On the same day a statement was made in my script about fir-trees planted in a garden which had a meaning for Mrs. Forbes, and a special connection with her automatic experiments, and the signature of this script, to which attention had been directed, represented partially the badge of Talbot Forbes' regiment, together with a sword. As bearing on the question whether such a combination is likely to have been accidental, I may say that on no other occasion has a bugle appeared in the script, nor has there been any other reference to a planted fir-tree."

The connection between the two writings and the significance of the drawings were only brought to light accidentally, owing to Mrs. Forbes, in talking to Mrs. Verrall about her son one day, in the following November, happening to describe the regimental badge. Mrs. Verrall then remembered the drawings, which had puzzled her at the time. The nail from which the bugle is hung is clearly indicated in the original.<sup>1</sup>

Another striking correspondence occurred a few months later between the automatic utterance of Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Piper.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xx. p. 222.



On January 31, 1902, Mrs. Verrall, when about to accompany Sir Oliver Lodge and Mr. Piddington to a meeting, was seized with a sudden desire to write, and withdrew for the purpose. The writing produced was as follows :

“Panopticon σφαιρᾶς αἰτάλλει συνδέγμα μυστικόν, τί οὐκ εἰδίδωσ ; volatile ferrum—pro telo impinget.”

The writing was shown to Dr. Verrall on the following day, but neither he nor Mrs. Verrall could interpret its significance. The first word, Panopticon, though not an actual Greek word, is derived from the Greek, and presumably means “all-seeing.” The third word in the sentence is rare ; the fourth, though correctly formed, is not found in any extant Greek writing. The whole sentence appears to mean, “The all-seeing of the sphere fosters a mystic joint-reception. Why did you not give it? The flying iron [“iron” used for “weapon”] will hit.” *Volatile ferrum* (literally, “the flying iron”) is used by Virgil for a spear, and Mrs. Verrall recorded in her notebook that the word was probably meant to be translated “spear.”

The first five words, taken by themselves, suggest an attempt to describe, in dog-Greek, the practice of crystal-gazing, in which Mrs. Verrall had at one time made experiments. But another interpretation was suggested when a letter was received from Dr. Hodgson. For it appeared that on January 28th, three days before this incident, Dr. Hodgson had held a sitting in Boston with Mrs. Piper, at which an allusion was made by the control to Mrs. Verrall's daughter. Hodgson asked if the control could make Miss Helen Verrall see him (*i.e.*, the control) holding a spear in his hand. The control asked, through the automatic writing, “Why a sphere?” and Hodgson repeated “*spear*.” At the next sitting, on February 4th, the control claimed that he had made himself visible to Miss Verrall with a “sphear” (so spelt in the trance writing).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xx. p. 214.

It is certainly difficult to avoid the conclusion that Mrs. Verrall's script of January 31st—a date intermediate between these two séances—with its curious enigmatical allusions to "sphere" and "spear," had reference to this transatlantic experiment.

When Mrs. Holland described, in the extract quoted above, the occupations and surroundings of Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Forbes, she did so in language which suggests that her mind was in some fashion reflecting, however dimly and imperfectly, the thoughts of her fellow-experimenters. But in the two cases last cited there is evidence of a further process. Mrs. Verrall's script does not simply reproduce images within the mind of another automatist. There are indications that some intelligence has worked over the simple telepathic data, and transformed them so that the message conveyed is not intelligible at first reading. But though not intelligible at once, the message is absolutely unambiguous as soon as the key to the riddle is found. These enigmatic utterances cannot therefore rightly be compared with the ordinary trance ambiguities which simply leave the utterances open to more than one interpretation. A still more striking instance of this apparently intentional obscurity occurred in a correspondence between the script of Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Holland in March, 1906, shortly before the simple case of correspondence already quoted. On March 2, 1906, Mrs. Verrall's hand wrote automatically two Latin sentences as follows :

"Non tali auxilio invenies quod velis non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis." †

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*

† "Not with such help will you find what you want ; not

“ Primus inter pares ipse non nominis immemor. Cum eo frater etsi non sanguine animo consanguineus ii ambo tibi per aliam vocem mittent—post aliquot dies bene quod dicam comprehendere potes—usque ad illud vale.”<sup>1</sup>

To Mrs. Verrall’s mind these sentences appeared to have no connection, and suggested no application. To Dr. Verrall, however, who was consulted at the time, the two passages, by a kind of trapeze flight of association, suggested Raphael’s picture of Attila before the gates of Rome confronted by Pope Leo and by the vision in the sky of St. Peter and St. Paul. Dr. Verrall did not mention his idea, but Mrs. Verrall’s script during the next two sittings seemed to convey hints of the same scene in the phrases: “ Pagan and Pope and Reformer . . . Crux significationem habit. Crucifer qui olim fertur . . . Leonis pelle sumpto claviger . . . ask your husband, he knows it well.” On March 7th Mrs. Holland, in the midst of a mass of correct allusions to Mrs. Verrall and her surroundings and occupations at the moment, wrote the following significant phrase: “ Ave Roma immortalis. How could I make it any clearer without giving her the clue?”<sup>2</sup>

In view of the numerous verified correspondences between Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Holland, some of them contained in the same piece of script as the *Ave Roma* with such help, nor with those defenders of yours.” The sentence is partly quoted from a well-known line in the “ Æneid ” (ii. 521).

<sup>1</sup> “ First among his peers, himself not unmindful of his name: with him a brother related in feeling though not in blood. Both these will send a word to you through another woman. After some days you will easily understand what I say—till then farewell.”

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. pp. 297—303.

message, it is difficult to explain the incident as the mere random result of a similar association of ideas ; but if the two sets of utterances have something more than an accidental relation, it is clear that simple telepathy will not explain the facts. In the two previous cases cited from Mrs. Verrall's script the riddles puzzled Mrs. Verrall, but their meaning became clear when the connection of the script with the other automatist was known. But in the present case Mrs. Holland knew no more of the matter than Mrs. Verrall, and the mere juxtaposition of the two scripts would not, and did not, explain the riddle. There are indications that is, of the operation of a third intelligence not that of either of the automatists.

But further, the intelligence which guided Mrs. Holland's hand seems clearly to indicate that it was giving an answer to a riddle in the phrase : " How could I make it any clearer without giving her the clue ? " And scattered through Mrs. Verrall's script at this period, generally in immediate connection with these enigmatic " cross-correspondences," occur other phrases of similar import, urging the writer to wait for the solution of the words she has not understood, to piece together and compare the different writings.<sup>1</sup> Here is one of the plainest of these exhortations,

<sup>1</sup> These passages occur almost exclusively in Mrs. Verrall's script. There are a few vague references in the scripts of Mrs. Holland and Mrs. Forbes to co-operation between sensitives. But the only unmistakable reference outside Mrs. Verrall's script to these cross-correspondences is the sentence quoted from Mrs. Holland in connection with *Ave Roma*. It should be added, however, as I learn from Miss Johnson, that Mrs. Verrall herself attached no importance to these phrases until long afterwards, when their possible significance was pointed out by Miss Johnson.

addressed to Mrs. Verrall by the intelligence which guides her hand :

“ Sit regularly and wait. I want something quite different tried. You are not to guess, and you will probably not understand what you write. But keep it all and say nothing about it yet. Then at Christmas or perhaps before you can compare your own words with another's, and the truth will be manifest.”

These frequent references, in conjunction with the actual illustrations of the process described, suggested to Miss Johnson, who edited Mrs. Holland's script, “ that one and the same intelligence, or group of intelligences, were responsible both for the cross-correspondences and the contemporary comments upon them ”—in other words, that they formed part of a scheme of communication designed by those beyond the gulf.

With a view to elucidate the significance of these “ cross-correspondences,” it was arranged to bring Mrs. Piper over to this country, and seventy-four trance sittings were held with her between November 10, 1906, and June 2, 1907. Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Holland also sat at intervals during the same period for the purpose of obtaining automatic writing. Mrs. Holland, it should be added, knew nothing about the sittings with Mrs. Piper and was throughout the period resident in India. From one point of view the experiments may be claimed to have been completely successful. The masterly collation and analysis of the three sets of scripts (including also a few automatic writings by Miss Verrall) undertaken by Mr. Piddington reveal coincidences of thought and expression too numerous and too detailed to be accounted



for by chance. Whatever interpretation may ultimately be given to these curious writings, we are forced to recognise something extraordinary to be explained. It may ultimately be proved that there is no indication of post-mortem agency, but to prove that it is necessary to assume the action of living minds upon one another of an unprecedented kind. From every point of view, then, these remarkable records are worthy of careful study. A few simple cases may be quoted.

1. Between 11 a.m. and noon on March 11, 1907, Mrs. Verrall wrote automatically as follows :

“ With violet buds their heads were crowned  
                   violaceæ odores  
 Violet and olive leaf purple and hoary  
 The city of the violet and olive crown.”  
                   \*                  \*                  \*                  \*                  \*

An hour or two later on the same day Mrs. Piper on coming out of the trance said “ Dr. Hodgson said ‘ violets ’ ”—the usual formula for indicating that a cross-correspondence had been attempted.

2. On April 3, 1907, Mrs. Verrall wrote :

Write three words—something about their serried ranks,—  
                   the avenging flame—the troop triumphant—  
 no, not quite that.

                  flaming swords—no  
                   flammantia mœnia mundi  
 But wings or feathered wings come in somewhere  
                   ‘ And with twain he covered his face ’  
 Try pinions of desire  
 The wings of Icarus

                  [Drawing of a wing ]  
 long pointed rainbow wings. But you keep going round the  
 ideas instead of giving three plain words

#### LOST PARADISE REGAINED

Of man's first Disobedience—no that is something else

a fluttering faint desire. Triumphant hosts in long array the wings point upwards behind the marshalled hosts.

It is a picture can you not see it? with sweeping stationary wings, not used in flight, but making a great aureole behind the central group. The hosts of heaven [Scribbles]

No I cant get it at all

Leave it to-day

his flame clad messengers

[Drawing of winged figure of angel]

that is better

F W H M has sent the message through—at last !

Five days later in Mrs. Piper's trance the "Myers control" claimed to have given *Angel* as a cross-correspondence to Mrs. Verrall.

3. On April 16, 1907, Mrs. Holland, in India, wrote as follows :

"Maurice. Morris. Mors.

"And with that the shadow of death fell upon him and his soul departed out of his limbs."

\* \* \* \* \*

(signed with the initials of a dead man).<sup>1</sup>

On the following day, in the intermediate stage between the trance and waking, Mrs. Piper said *Sanatos* and *Tanatos* (interpreted at the time as *Thanatos*—the Greek for "Death").

On the 23rd and again on the 30th of the same month she ejaculated *Thanatos*—on the last occasion repeating it twice.

On April 29th—the day preceding the last appear-

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<sup>1</sup> For some further details of this script see Miss Johnson's note on the case in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. p. 221.

ance of the word in Mrs. Piper's utterances—Mrs. Verrall had written the following :

Warmed both hands before the Fire of Life.  
It fails and I am ready to depart.

Δ

Manibus date lilia plenis  
[Sign apparently representing the ace of clubs]  
The river Nile Δ  
Daisy  
Come away Come away  
Pallida mors aequo pede pauperum  
tabernas regumque tures  
put in pulsat  
Another time will help  
Goodbye.  
But you have got the word plainly written  
all along in your own writing. Look back.

The four quotations—from Landor, Virgil, Shakespeare, and Horace—all refer to death. The ace of clubs was one of the two fatal cards in Stevenson's *Suicides' Club*. The Greek letter Δ (*Delta*) had for Mrs. Verrall a special association with death. The whole script thus completes a triple cross-correspondence.

4. On April 8, 1907, at 7 a.m. (Greenwich time), Mrs. Holland, in India, wrote :

“The constellation of Orion. . . .

“Do you remember that exquisite sky when the afterglow made the East as beautiful and as richly coloured as the West——”

On the same day, at about 1 p.m., Mrs. Piper ejaculated in the waking stage of the trance, “Light in West.”

At about 3 p.m. on the same day Mrs. Verrall wrote :

"The words were from Maud but you did not understand. Rosy is the east and so on.

"You will find that you have written a message for Mr. Piddington which you did not understand but he did. Tell him that."

The actual words in "Maud" are :

"Rosy is the West,"

preceded by :

"Blush from West to East,  
Blush from East to West,  
Till the West is East.  
Blush it thro' the West."

These are but four instances out of many. Mr. Piddington discusses the successful cross-correspondences under twenty-three heads, but some of the heads include several verbal coincidences such as those given above.

Two conclusions are forced upon us by an impartial study of the report :

1. That the coincidences cannot be explained by mere chance association of ideas. They indicate unmistakably the action of some external intelligence on the minds of the automatists.

2. That the enigmatic form of the phrasing is due, not to aimless groping after an elusive idea, but to design. Take the second case, for instance. The word "Angel" is suggested throughout Mrs. Verrall's script. But it is nowhere expressly written; the nearest approach to it comes at the end, where the word "Messenger"—the literal translation of the Greek *Angelos*—is given, followed by the drawing of a winged human figure.

So in the third case. Mrs. Verrall's whole script suggests death, but, again, the word seems to be deliberately avoided. The Shakespearean quotation is even broken off immediately before the significant word is reached.

In both these cases there seems to be design: the question to be determined is, whose design? These cases—and they are, with some qualifications to be considered later, fair samples of the evidence printed in Mr. Piddington's report—can scarcely be claimed as illustrating the type of cross-correspondence desired as evidence of design on the part of a disembodied spirit. In the *Ave Roma Immortalis* incident the allusions in Mrs. Verrall's script were so artfully veiled that they remained for the writer herself an unsolved enigma to the last. But a child could guess the riddle in these others. It looks rather as if Mrs. Verrall's dream consciousness was aware that the central idea must be concealed in allusive imagery, and was doing its dreamlike best to fulfil the requirement. That, in fact, the imagery was, in some cases at least, supplied from the writer's own mind we have clear evidence. It will be remembered that an equilateral triangle appeared twice in the script of April 29, 1907, and that on the second occasion it was prefaced by the words "The river Nile," as if to show unmistakably that it was intended for the Greek letter *Delta* ( $\Delta$ ). Now, *Delta* has no general association with death, but it happens to be closely associated in Mrs. Verrall's mind with the idea of death, from a mistaken notion, conceived in childhood, that the letter *Delta* was engraved on the voting tablets used to condemn. The imagery in this case, then, could have proceeded from no other



source than the writer's own mind. The introduction in the same script of *Manibus date lilia plenis*, a quotation from the passage in the Sixth "Æneid" where Anchises foretells the early death of Marcellus, is also—as Mr. Piddington points out—probably to be explained by the fact that on the day before the script was written Mrs. Verrall had come across Dante's translation of the passage in "Purgatorio," canto xxx.

There is one other case which is still more significant in this connection.

On February 19, 1907, Mr. Piddington suggested to the entranced Mrs. Piper "Giant and Dwarf" as the subject of a cross-correspondence experiment with Mrs. Verrall. Mrs. Piper's control accepted the suggestion, and said he would go off at once to execute it. Later, the controls repeatedly claimed to have been successful in transferring *Dwarf*. Mrs. Verrall, who was not told of the date of the experiment, twice searched the whole of the script written during a period of some months. On the first occasion she failed to find any allusion to *Dwarf*. On the second occasion, still in ignorance of the date, she found in the script of February 19th, written a few hours only after the suggestion had been given to Mrs. Piper, an allusion to *Dwarf* which had escaped her original scrutiny. The allusion is contained in the words :

" A long feather,  
Ask about the feather,  
Up the mountain—no, that is  
Owl's feather ; not what I want."

" Up the mountain " and " owl's feather " suggested to Mrs. Verrall a poem, very familiar to her, by William Allingham, telling of little men, wee folk, or, in other

words, fairies. The coincidence in time is here so close that it seems probable that Mrs. Verrall's script is actually connected with the *Dwarf* of the experiment; and it would seem at first sight that we have found here a cross-correspondence of the kind desired: an allusion artfully concealed even from the automatist herself. But if there were, indeed, design in this instance, it was not the design of a directing intelligence external to the minds of the two automatists. For what the Piper controls repeatedly claimed to have impressed on Mrs. Verrall was not the idea of Dwarf, but the actual letters of the word—D W R F. So that the allusive imagery in this case also was supplied by the mind of the automatist.

One more case may be quoted as throwing some light on the genesis of these curious cross-correspondences. On January 16, 1907, Mrs. Piper's controls claimed to have given "Steeple" as the subject of a test message through the hand of Mrs. Thompson and of Mrs. Verrall. Mr. Piddington, at the moment when the entranced Mrs. Piper wrote this statement, was under the impression that he had received a letter a few days previously informing him that the word "Steeple" had occurred in the writings of Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Holland. Subsequent inquiry proved that he was mistaken: no such letter had been written, and the word had not occurred in the scripts of any other automatist. Nevertheless, so firm had been the impression in Mr. Piddington's mind that on January 14th, two days before the Piper sitting, he had told Mrs. Verrall of the discovery of the word "Steeple" as a cross-correspondence in her script. The fact is attested by a letter written by Mrs. Verrall

in ignorance of the claim made by the Piper controls.

Here, then, we have a clear case in which the Piper controls received an impression (telepathically, it must be presumed) from Mr. Piddington's mind, but interpreted it as a case of successful experiment with two of the other automatists.

The experiments cited would seem to point to the conclusion that the coincidences demonstrated are due to the direct action of the mind of one automatist on the mind of another, or possibly, to such action through the intermediary of the other experimenters. The allusive and enigmatic phrasing in which the test words are concealed is rarely found in Mrs. Piper's utterances, and is most conspicuous in the script of Mrs. Verrall. It has been proved that in some cases, at any rate, this characteristic indirectness of phrasing is due to the efforts of the subconscious personality, apparently aiming to produce the kind of evidence required.

Before, however, dismissing these records as furnishing yet one more illustration of the readiness of our mysterious inner self to meet any demands that may be made upon its dramatic powers, we must consider the evidence a little more closely. There are a few cases of cross-correspondence which do not so readily lend themselves to analysis. In these cases we have to deal, not with the coincidence of a single word or a single idea, but with a series of partial and allusive coincidences, suggesting that the minds of two or three automatists are developing the same train of associations, and reciprocally influencing each other's thoughts in so doing. The triple coincidence quoted

under heading 4 forms part of a long series of similar partial coincidences between the scripts of Mrs. Verrall, Mrs. Holland, and Mrs. Piper. In this, as in the other cases, the coincidences appear chiefly in the form of literary allusions, the authors principally drawn upon being Tennyson, Browning, Dante, and F. W. H. Myers. To most it will seem probable, if telepathy is admitted as a *vera causa*, that these coincidences are due to random telepathic reverberations from one mind to another. There is certainly no such clear indication as in the *Ave Roma Immortalis* incident of the action of a directive intelligence other than those of the automatists themselves. But the details are complicated: some of the links of association are extremely subtle and elusive, and the appreciation of the whole bearing of the evidence is extraordinarily difficult. For in dealing with ambiguous, allusive, and semi-coherent utterances of this kind it is almost inevitable that the interpretation should be guided by the unconscious bias of the reader. A conspicuous example of the tendency is afforded by the Shakespeare-Bacon cryptograms. Space will not permit of more than a single illustration of these difficulties being quoted. I will choose for the purpose the Latin message and its suggested connection with a previous cross-correspondence—Hope, Star, and Browning. To test the hypothesis that they had to deal with discarnate intelligences who had already designed the plan of cross-correspondence as a means of proving their personal identity, the following message was drawn up by the experimenters:

“We are aware of the scheme of cross-correspondences which you are transmitting through various mediums, and we hope that you will go on with them. Try *also* to give

to A and B two different messages, between which no connection is discernible. Then as soon as possible give to C a third message which will reveal the hidden connection."

For the purpose of transmission to Mrs. Piper's controls the message was translated into Latin as follows :

"Diversis internuntiis quod invicem inter se respondentia jamdudum committis, id nec fallit nos consilium, et vehementer probamus.

"Unum accesserit gratissimum nobis, si, cum duobus quibusdam ea tradideris, inter quae nullus appareat nexus, postea quam primum rem per tertium aliquem ita perficias, ut latens illud in prioribus explicetur."

The Latin, it will be seen, is so worded that a person ignorant of the language or a lower-form schoolboy armed with a dictionary would be unlikely to arrive at the meaning of the whole passage. The message was repeatedly dictated word by word at several successive séances to the entranced Mrs. Piper. The dictation began on December 17, 1906, and was not completed until January 2, 1907. On January 16th, a fortnight after the completion of the dictation, and before a translation had been attempted, Mr. Piddington tells us that he impressed on the Piper-Myers the importance of cross-correspondence messages, and expressed the opinion that it was "more important to get them than for you spirits to give facts about your past lives." To that the Piper-Myers replied by asking why so much importance was attached to cross-correspondences: for, said he, "if you establish telepathic messages, you will doubtless attribute all such to thoughts from those living in the mortal body." The answer shows conclusively that the Piper-Myers had



not grasped the plan of complex cross-correspondences which the Verrall-Myers, according to the hypothesis, had been actively elaborating for some years previously ; and further, that the Piper-Myers, at that date, January 16, 1907, had not yet succeeded in translating the Latin message.

The first attempt to translate the Latin message was made on February 20th, more than a month later. "It is with reference," the Piper-Myers says, "to my being a messenger and my handing through to you coherent . . . messages."

A few days later, on February 27th, the Piper-Myers writes : "I feel a little perturbed over your message to me when you said I [failed] in replying sufficiently to convince you, &c., altho' I, as intermediary, had long since united my ideas." Later in the same sitting he makes it clear that this passage was intended for a translation of the Latin message : for he now gives the translation as follows :

"Although you as intermediary have long since united mutually ideas. You have or do not reply or respond sufficiently to our questions as to convince us of your existence."

These replies show unmistakable knowledge of the meaning of some of the individual Latin words, and equally unmistakable ignorance of the meaning of the passage as a whole. There is, it will be seen, no reference to cross-correspondences.

Later the trance intelligence, after attempting to connect the message with a "poem" or "poems," and with individual experiments already made, seems definitely to have connected it with the idea of cross-correspondence in general, as, indeed, under the circumstances it or they could hardly fail to do.

But even then the reference is to cross-correspondences of the simple kind. On March 6th the trance intelligence, after repeating in almost identical words the "translation" above quoted, adds to it: "Now if you give a clear message through Mrs. V. and reproduce it here, it will do more to convince or it will . . . greatly help to convince the world of your continued existence—this was the idea as I received it." Finally, on May 27th, the Piper-Myers gives as the translation the following:

"You have long since been trying to assimilate ideas, but I wish you to give through Mrs. Verrall proof of the survival of bodily death in such a way as to make it conclusive"; and then adds, "He mentioned my own words in it, viz., the *Survival of Bodily Death*" [words which formed part of the title of Myers' last work].

It would appear, then, from the reception of this Latin message that Mrs. Piper's trance intelligence, though it had somehow learnt the meaning of some of the words in the first clause, and succeeded in putting them together so as to make sense, was unable, after repeated efforts continued for nearly four months, to construe the passage as a whole and is reduced to guesswork. It hardly required any supernormal faculty for the trance intelligence, after repeated attempts, to guess no nearer the truth than it succeeded in doing.

If this were a complete account of the matter, it would, no doubt, be recognised by all that the reception of the Latin message had proved fatal to the claims of the trance intelligence, at any rate, on this particular occasion. But the experimenters do not admit that the foregoing statement is a complete account of the matter. Mr. Piddington, in his original

report, claims that the Latin message was adequately answered, not by the translations above quoted, but by repeated references to an actual cross-correspondence, which almost, but not quite, fulfils the requirements. Miss Johnson, in criticising the foregoing summary of the Latin message incident, repeats the claim :

“ Mr. Podmore,” she says, “ has omitted to take into account the important fact that though the Piper-Myers failed to show any real comprehension in the abstract of the plan of cross-correspondences, he pointed out—and maintained his point in the face of every discouragement—that ‘ Browning, Hope, and Star ’ was an instance of the kind required.”<sup>1</sup>

“ Browning, Hope, and Star ” is a brief description of an extremely complex, allusive, and enigmatic cross-correspondence, in which Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Verrall, and Miss Verrall all took part. The relative scripts were written in the period between January 23rd and February 17th—shortly after the Latin message had been dictated. The first attempt at translation, as already said, took place on February 20th. In the interval, on February 11th, though not in any connection with the Latin message, the control spontaneously referred to *Evangelical, Browning, Hope, and Star*. Immediately after the second reference to the three words last quoted, Mr. Piddington, in taking leave of the control, asked him to reply to the Latin message at the next sitting (Report, p. 320).

In the course of the next few days Mr. Piddington read the scripts of Mrs. and Miss Verrall, in which the cross-correspondence “ Hope, Star, and Browning ”

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. p. 262, note.

occurred, and, in his own words, before February 20th : "I had become impressed, I may even say obsessed, with the idea that Mrs. Verrall's script of January 28th, which had on February 11th been described in the trance by the Piper-Myers as 'Hope, Star, and Browning,' was an attempt by the Verrall-Myers to give, by means of indirect allusions to stanza vii. of 'Abt Vogler,' an intelligent answer to the Latin message" (p. 330).

Note Mr. Piddington's very candid account of the state of mind in which he approached the séances of February 20th and subsequent dates.

On February 20th there occurred the first attempt at translation. On February 27th occurred the two other attempts above quoted. In the interval between these two later attempts the control remarked : "I believe . . . I have sufficiently replied to your various questions to convince the ordinary scientific mind . . ." Mr. Piddington, referring to this statement, said later in the séance to the control : "You say you have replied—tell me in what messages your reply is given." The control, in answer, refers successively to "the poems," "halcyon days," "evangelic," "shrub," "syringa," "the poems and cross-correspondence messages." Mr. Piddington then asks, "What poems?" The control replies, "My own, Browning . . . Horace." At the control's request Mr. Piddington repeats the last utterance, and the control continues : "Yes, chiefly Browning's lines as given through Mrs. Verrall and another, which I referred to before."

Mr. Piddington then tells the control : "I want to say that you have, I believe, given an answer worthy

of your intelligence—not to-day, I mean, but some time back—but the interpretation must not be mine. You must explain your answer [through Mrs. Piper]. You could do it in two words.”

*The control* replies, “Hope, Star.” *Mr. Piddington*.—Well? Yes? *The control*.—“Browning.” *Mr. Piddington* then tells the control: “In telling me that Browning, Hope, and Star contains your answer to the Latin message you have given an answer which to me is both intelligible and clear.”<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly necessary to say that after the last explicit statement by *Mr. Piddington* no later reference to the connection of the Latin message with “Hope, Star, and Browning” could possess much evidential value. But, in fact, it does not appear that, despite the strong hint given, the trance intelligence did advance much farther in connecting the two ideas.

It is, then, on the conversation above summarised that *Mr. Piddington* has based his contention that the control showed a comprehension of the purport of the Latin message. And presumably *Miss Johnson* relies upon the same incidents to support her statement that “the Piper-Myers pointed out—and maintained his point in the face of every discouragement—that ‘Browning, Hope, and Star’ was an instance of the kind required.”

In my view we should not even be justified in regarding the connection—casual and insignificant as

<sup>1</sup> The account of the whole conversation is much abbreviated; but if the reader will refer to the original (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxii. pp. 320—31) he will, I think, find that nothing which has any bearing upon the present question has been omitted.



that connection seems to be—of the Latin message with “ Hope, Star, and Browning ” as spontaneous on the part of the trance intelligence. The control suggested several things. Mr. Piddington, on its repetition, selects the word “ poems,” and asks, “ What poems? ” The control names three poets, and asks Mr. Piddington to repeat the sentence after him. After listening to Mr. Piddington the control selects Browning. But “ Browning ” had already been connected with “ Hope and Star ” at a previous séance. The evidence, as it stands, is not such as would be accepted in a telepathic experiment.

But another question arises from the record. How did the trance intelligence learn the meaning of the individual Latin words in the first clause? There are two possible sources—telepathy or a dictionary. Now, apart from other objections to the hypothesis, it seems improbable that telepathy should give just what a dictionary would give and no more. The experimenters would not think of “ messenger ” and “ intermediary ” as the translation of *internuntiis*, nor of “ coherent ” as the translation of *invicem inter se respondentia*, nor would they have translated *fallit nos consilium* as “ failed to convince.” To recognise, however, that the knowledge shown by the entranced Mrs. Piper was perhaps derived from a dictionary does not imply bad faith on the part of the Mrs. Piper whom her friends know and esteem in the waking state.<sup>1</sup> Nor does it seriously invalidate the evidence in the other cases, since no dictionary could have told Mrs. Piper

<sup>1</sup> For a similar incident, suggesting possible reference to a dictionary, see the mistranslation of *mori* (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. p. 223).

what Mrs. Verrall was writing in Cambridge or Mrs. Holland in India.

It would appear, then, from the four months' trial of the Latin message that the trance personality which the experimenters call Myers-P., or the Piper-Myers, had not even at the end of the sittings grasped the scheme of complex cross-correspondences: was so far from grasping it, indeed, that not even the numerous hints given in the course of the dialogue succeeded in conveying that idea. From this it would seem to follow, not merely that the Piper-Myers is an intelligence of distinctly inferior capacity, but that it is not identical with the intelligence, claiming to emanate from the same discarnate source, which has for years past been elaborating, through Mrs. Verrall's hand, a scheme of complex cross-correspondences.

But this conclusion, even if put forward in a less tentative form, would not, of course, end the matter. Some parts of the records, as already indicated, are not easy to interpret. In the present chapter only a few of the simpler and less ambiguous cases of cross-correspondence have been dealt with. The space at my disposal would not permit of an adequate summary of the more complex cases. For these the reader must study the Report itself. But so far as my analysis of these cases has gone I cannot find any coincidences of thought and expression of which the natural association of ideas in minds preoccupied with the same themes, aided by occasional telepathic interaction amongst the automatists themselves, would not appear to furnish a sufficient explanation.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MOST RECENT EVIDENCE

THE latest publication of the Society for Psychical Research<sup>1</sup> contains papers by Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, Mrs. Verrall, Miss Johnson, and Mr. Piddington describing the most recent cross-correspondences. The results add considerably to the strength of the case for supernormal faculty of some kind. Their bearing on the more difficult question at issue, the source of the supernormal knowledge shown by the automatists, is of an equivocal nature. There is one case, at least, which may be held to furnish perhaps the clearest and most direct evidence yet obtained for the Spiritualist hypothesis. Another case, in which the coincidences are equally striking, may be set against this as pointing, with perhaps even greater emphasis, to a naturalistic interpretation of the whole series of cross-correspondences.

#### THE LETHE INCIDENT.

After Mrs. Piper's visit to this country in the winter of 1906-07, she returned to America, and in the spring of the following year, 1908, Mr. G. B. Dorr arranged to have a series of sittings with her. Mr. Dorr's object was twofold: (a) to obtain cross-corre-

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. part lx.

spondences with the English group of automatists, who were ignorant of the fact that any such experiments were being made ; (b) to attempt to revive the literary memories of the Piper-Myers, and thus test his claim to identity. Both experiments met with success. Some interesting correspondences were obtained, chiefly with the script of Miss Verrall. With one exception, however, they add little to our previous knowledge. The success obtained in the other direction was, however, of a most striking kind ; and the results constitute, perhaps, the strongest evidence yet obtained for the identity of any communicator. Briefly, the Piper-Myers, after his memory had been stimulated by a few trite classical quotations, by the recital of some verse translations from classical writers, and one or two extracts from his own autobiography bearing upon his classical studies, showed an intelligent, and in many particulars intimate, knowledge of some of the classical poets, especially of Ovid and Virgil—a knowledge which far exceeded that possessed by his interlocutor, Mr. Dorr. Before proceeding to discuss the possible explanations of the knowledge shown I will quote at length a single illustration.

Towards the end of the sitting held on March 23, 1908, Mr. Dorr asked the Piper-Myers : “What does the word L E T H E suggest to you?” adding that the word related to the old mythology, that it was a water, and was situated in Hades.

The trance intelligence in the course of the same sitting, amongst many irrelevant classical allusions, wrote : “Do you remember ‘*cave*’?” In the waking stage, again in the midst of many irrelevant allusions,

some to contemporary cross-correspondence experiments, Mrs. Piper muttered an indistinct word, recorded by Mr. Dorr as "pavia," and a little later said :

"Pharaoh's daughter came out of the water. Warm sunlit love.

Lime leaf heart sword arrow

I shot an arrow through the air

And it fell I know not where."

Mrs. Piper then described a vision of "a lady who had no clothes on," who held in her hand

"a hoop and two pointed things—and she pulled a string and she pointed it straight at me, and I thought it would hit me in the eye . . . and there was only half of the hoop there."¹

This ended the séance of March 23rd.

All this conveyed nothing to Mr. Dorr's mind, and he supposed the woman archer to represent Diana.

At the sitting of the following day the control, purporting to be Hodgson, said that Myers was disturbed because he felt that Mr. Dorr had not understood the replies about Lethe, and added :

I wrote in reply to your last inquiry Cave Lethe.

G. B. D.—I asked him [*i.e.*, Myers] whether the word Lethe recalled anything to him.

He replied Cave Banks Shore.

G. B. D.—But these last two [*i.e.*, "Banks Shore"] were not written until after I had told him it was a water.

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¹ It should be explained that, for the sake of clearness, I have selected in my account of the Lethe incident only the most indubitably relevant passages. There is a good deal of irrelevant matter, and some minor points, which, as explained by Mr. Piddington, go some way towards enhancing the value of the coincidence. But space will not admit of an exhaustive setting out of the incident.



Yes, but he drew the form—a picture of Iris with an arrow.

G. B. D.—But he spoke of winds.

Yes, clouds arrow Iris Cave Mor M O R Latin for sleep Morpheus Cave. Sticks in my mind can't you help me?

G. B. D.—Good. I understand what you are after now. But can't you make it clearer what there was peculiar about the waters of Lethe?

Yes, I suppose you think I am affected in the same way but I am not.

From the last sentence it is clear that the trance intelligence was familiar with the ordinary associations of Lethe, and that he, apparently, with intention, refrained from giving them.

The control then repeated "Cave," "I R I S," and "C L O U D S," and when asked for more details about Lethe gave "Flowery Banks," and explained that the woman shooting was meant for Iris.

In the waking stage of this second sitting the first word whispered was again recorded as "pavia," but again it was impossible to hear it distinctly.

Mrs. Piper then said: "Mr. Myers is writing on the wall"; and said, first, C, and then, after a pause, Y X.

At the sitting of March 30th Mr. Dorr, in accordance with his custom, asked the control, now writing through Mrs. Piper's hand, for further light on the enigmatic utterances of the waking stage at the previous sitting. C-y-x was explained as "chariot." Asked to spell the word, the control wrote Cynx, C Y N X, and assented to the suggestion that it was a Greek word. In reply to a question about the word recorded as pavia, the hand wrote Pomona. Later in the sitting Mr. Dorr said: "I see no connection between Iris and Lethe."

To which the control replied: "No, only Iris shot an arrow into the clouds and caused a rainbow. It brought it to my mind simply."

In the waking stage on April 6th again came C Y X ; and in the sitting of April 7th the hand explained C Y X as S C Y X, C S Y X. Finally, in the waking stage of the same sitting Mrs. Piper said: "Mr. Myers says, 'No poppies ever grew on Elysian shores.'"

Mr. Dorr found all these remarks irrelevant to the topic of Lethe. Mrs. Verrall and Mr. Gerald Balfour, who some months later read through the scripts, equally failed to find anything coherent or intelligible in them. The clue was eventually discovered through the industry and acumen of Mr. Piddington, who searched the classics until he found, in the Eleventh Book of Ovid's "Metamorphoses," hitherto unknown to him, the source of the various allusions.

Briefly, the story told by Ovid is as follows :

C E Y X, King of Trachin, was drowned at sea, and Juno sent I R I S, goddess of the Rainbow, to Somnus (S L E E P) to bid him carry the news in a dream to Alcyone, Ceyx's queen. Iris prints her B O W upon the sky, and glides down to the C A V E of Sleep, which was surrounded and hidden by dark C L O U D S. From the foot of the rock flows the river of L E T H E, and on its B A N K S are P O P P I E S and innumerable F L O W E R S,<sup>1</sup> from whose juice Night distils Sleep. Finally, Somnus sends his son M O R P H E U S to impersonate in a dream the dead Ceyx.

In the above extract I have emphasised by capital

<sup>1</sup> "Innumeræque herbæ."

letters the points of correspondence between Ovid's story and the trance utterances. The only doubtful point is the identification of the indistinctly articulated word "pavia" with *papavera*, the Latin for poppies.

There can be no question that the intelligence which answered the question about Lethe knew this story from Ovid; and it is a plausible inference that it deliberately chose this particular legend, rather than the more familiar stories about Lethe, with the intention of giving a more conclusive test. In the course of the same sittings spontaneous reference was made to three other legends included in the Tenth and Eleventh books of the "Metamorphoses," the whole story being given in one case—that of Hyacinthus, slain by a discus thrown by the hand of Apollo, from whose blood sprang up a purple lily. The trance intelligence showed also a scholarly grasp of the subject of the first book of the "Æneid," and made references, which seem to imply accurate knowledge, to passages in the Second and Sixth Books. Further, after an English translation of lines 160-83 of the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus had been read aloud by Mr. Dorr, Mrs. Piper in the waking stage of the same sitting whispered "Agamemnon";<sup>1</sup> and at a later sitting stated that "Achylus"—afterwards corrected to "Æschylus"—"wrote three plays"—an obvious reference to the famous Trilogy.

The first thing to be noted is that the knowledge shown went far beyond that of the sitter. Mr. Dorr

<sup>1</sup> The part of the chorus quoted does not include the word "Agamemnon," or, indeed, give any possible clue to the subject of the play.

has explained that he dropped Latin and Greek after his second year at Harvard, and that he has read no Greek since "and scarcely any Latin—none for a long time." He had read at school the first three or four books of the *Æneid*, but no Ovid.<sup>1</sup>

If we cross the Atlantic, we find that neither Mrs. nor Miss Verrall, two classical scholars who are known to have influenced Mrs. Piper's trance intelligence, though, of course, familiar with the "*Æneid*" and the "*Agamemnon*," had ever read the Tenth and Eleventh Books of the "*Metamorphoses*"; nor, as already said, had Mr. Piddington.

On the other hand, the love and homage which Frederic Myers paid to Virgil are well known; and Ovid figures in a list of five classical poets whose poetry, as he tells us in his *Autobiography*, he was in the habit of inwardly reciting between the ages of ten and sixteen.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Piddington adduces other reasons, based on a study of his poetry, for supposing that Myers was familiar in particular with the Tenth and Eleventh Books of the "*Metamorphoses*." It may, no doubt, fairly be assumed that all the knowledge shown by the trance intelligence had been combined in the mind of Frederic Myers; and we know of no living mind in Mrs. Piper's environment—even if we allow that environment to stretch across the Atlantic—from which all the information could have been derived telepathically. The result of the Horace-Ode question already referred to, and some of the previous cross-correspondences in which the Verrall-Myers and the Holland-Myers ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. p. 42, note.

<sup>2</sup> "*Fragments of Prose and Poetry*," p. 17.

hibited characteristically allusive methods of revealing knowledge similar to those employed in this case by the Piper-Myers, all seem to point in the same direction. It must, I think, be admitted on all hands that the method of answering the Lethe question was well devised; that this is precisely the kind of evidence demanded for the proof of spirit-identity; and that, though no single case can, of course, be conclusive, yet that if evidence of this kind were multiplied the presumption in favour of the reality of spirit communication might at length become irresistible.

Taken by itself, however, the new evidence can hardly be claimed as strong enough appreciably to weaken the presumption against the authenticity of these spirit messages derived from the whole experience of the past, and there are in the present case two special features difficult to reconcile with the hypothesis.

1. It will have been noticed that the bulk of the communications received from Mrs. Piper are written through her hand in the trance, and purport to be dictated by some discarnate intelligence. But in the prolonged process of emerging from the trance (what is called "the waking stage") Mrs. Piper gives many important pieces of information *vivâ voce*—the names *C Y X* and *Agamemnon* were thus given in the case of the American sittings—and gives them, as a rule, *in propria persona*. Now, it frequently happens that the intelligence which guides the hand in writing is unable to explain the words uttered in the waking stage. Thus, in the present series, to take a few instances, the hand gave ridiculous explanations of *C Y X* and of "pavia," explained an apparent allusion to Orpheus and Eurydice by the word "Venus," and said



that the words "a lily came up from the blood" referred to Prometheus!

But all the successful allusions, whether written or spoken, are counted, for the purpose of the correspondence, as proceeding from the same intelligence; and, indeed, some of the utterances in the waking stage are prefaced with the remark "Mr. Myers says." It is extremely difficult to reconcile this ignorance or forgetfulness with the identity of the spirit purporting to communicate alike by hand and voice. In this connection we note the curious fact that the trance intelligence seems to be unaware of its mental processes. According to the views above put forward Iris was introduced at the first sitting as a prominent feature in the Ovid story, which was itself intended to furnish a complete, but enigmatic, answer to the question about Lethe. But note that Iris is introduced at the first sitting through the intermediary of "arrow," which is itself apparently suggested by the otherwise meaningless "sword." Again, at the sitting of March 30th, when Mr. Dorr says, "I see no connection between Iris and Lethe," the reply is: "No, only Iris shot an arrow into the clouds, and caused a rainbow. . . . It brought it to my mind simply."

Are we to suppose that discarnate intelligences also are liable to dissociation of consciousness?

2. The other point is this. The name written Ceyx is a dissyllable; and not only so, but both vowels are long—Cē-ȳx (pronounce Kay-eeks). But it would seem that both the hand and voice in their efforts to recall the exact word represent it as a monosyllable. On its first appearance, in the waking stage, the word is spelt *vivâ voce* C (pause) Y X, and the pronunciation

is not attempted. But the hand makes three shots—C Y N X, S C Y X, C S Y X, and the voice on April 6th spells it C Y X. Now, this misconception, improbable in a scholar who was familiar with the original poem where the word occurs repeatedly, would be, one must think, impossible to a scholar who was also a poet, for whom the sound of a word must be of primary importance. But the mistake would be perfectly natural in the case of one who was not a scholar, and who made the acquaintance of the word only in a prose translation.<sup>1</sup>

But these considerations are not, of course, conclusive against the spirit hypothesis, and no other solution which can be suggested fits the facts conspicuously better, if, indeed, as well.

The theory that Mrs. Piper should have deliberately got up the information is, in my judgment, untenable as a complete explanation of the facts. We could scarcely, for instance, explain the Agamemnon incident, and many others, by previous knowledge on her part. So in the Lethe case, "Cave," "pavia," and "Iris" were indicated at the same sitting at which the test was sprung upon her. That Mrs. Piper's reading should have included Ovid's "Metamorphoses" would be a most surprising chance; that she should also know the "Agamemnon" so well as to recognise the translation of part of a chorus would seem to be practically out of the question.

<sup>1</sup> The trance intelligence appears to be aware of its own deficiency in this respect. At the sitting of March 30th, after giving the meaning of C Y X as "Chariot," the hand wrote "Pronounce the word for me." It should be mentioned, as Mr. Piddington has pointed out to me, that the name "Ceyx" is a monosyllable in Homer ("Odyssey," xv. 479).

Moreover, Mrs. Piper's known history during the past twenty-five years affords a strong presumption against any deliberate deception of the kind; and, once more, the curious ignorance, in the trance, of utterances made in the waking stage is hardly compatible with the deliberate getting up of a subject.

That the information given should be due to unconscious reminiscence on Mrs. Piper's part is again negatived by the wide range and precision of the knowledge displayed. Men and women of moderate education are presumably not more inclined in America than in the corresponding social class in England to read Virgil and Æschylus for the amusement of their leisure hours. Mr. Dorr has searched Mrs. Piper's library, and found no trace of classical culture, even in the shape of English translations or stories from the classic writers.

There remains the possibility that the classical knowledge shown was derived, by telepathy, from the mind of the sitter. This theory has the advantage that it is entirely consistent with the two features most difficult to explain on the hypothesis of spirit communication. If the knowledge shown in the Lethe incident came from Mr. Dorr's mind, the treatment of Ceyx as a monosyllable would be accounted for on the assumption that Mr. Dorr had read the story in English as a boy. Further, the division between the memories of the two stages of trance is a perfectly natural and, indeed, common feature, if we regard Mrs. Piper's trance as simply a case of spontaneous dissociation of consciousness, comparable to numerous other cases of "secondary personality" which have been described of recent years. In these cases the several

stages of dissociation are marked either by mutually exclusive memories or by what may be called concentric memories.

Again, there is some possible evidence for this theory, apart from the general presumption in its favour derived from the study of Mrs. Piper's trance phenomena at large. Mr. Dorr had successful sittings, referred to in a previous chapter, with the Piper-Hodgson, and received many accounts of incidents which, so far as they were identified, could have been derived from his own memory. In the present series of sittings some of the correct answers, especially the Agamemnon and Æschylus case, could have been derived from his thoughts at the moment.

And finally, Mr. Piddington's indefatigable industry has established that the four Ovidian stories to which the most detailed references were made in connection with the Lethe incident, viz., the legends of Ceyx and Alcyone, Orpheus and Eurydice, Pygmalion and Hyacinthus, are all contained in a book—Bulfinch's "Age of Fable"—which Mr. Dorr had actually read as a boy, though he now retains little recollection of these classical legends.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Mr. Piddington's conjectural emendation of *papavera* for "pavia," which is too

<sup>1</sup> On learning that the Cave of Sleep story was contained in Bulfinch's "Age of Fable," Mr. Dorr obtained a copy of the book, and, after looking it through, wrote as follows:

"The book seems little familiar in its stories to me now—unlike other books that interested me more when I was a child, and whose every incident still comes back to me as I turn the pages over. The one part of it that I remember well is the Norse stories at the end. I doubt my ever having read the others wholly through, for much seems new to me."

probable to be lightly dismissed, can scarcely be fitted in with this theory. Moreover, the four Ovidian stories, which are quoted by the trance intelligence in close chronological sequence, are all found in close connection in the original, viz., in the Tenth and Eleventh Books of the "Metamorphoses"; whereas in Bulfinch's book they are scattered through chapters viii., ix., and xxiv. Further, Mr. Dorr can recall having read only the first three or four books of the "Æneid," whereas there are one or two references which seem to imply intimate familiarity with passages in the Sixth Book.

Mr. Dorr's own opinion on the subject—"My experience with the Piper trance does not lead me to believe that the trance consciousness is able to tap my mind for facts or thoughts . . . [I think that] it rarely if ever gets subliminal impressions from my mind"—is also entitled to some weight.<sup>1</sup> And, finally, we have to remember that Mr. Dorr found many of the allusions at the time unintelligible, and that others which were in accordance with the legends appeared to him incorrect. If all these stores of classical learning really came from Mr. Dorr's mind, we have to credit him with a capacious forgetfulness, if the phrase may be allowed, hardly less remarkable in its way than the powers of telepathic assimilation which we must ascribe to the trance intelligence.

The explanation, then, must be admitted to involve many and serious improbabilities. But I feel that the improbabilities involved in any of the suggested alternatives are at least equally serious. The wisest counsel, if also the most difficult to follow, is to hold our judgment in suspense.

<sup>1</sup> "Proceedings S.P.R.", vol. xxiv. p. 42, footnote.



## THE SEVENS INCIDENT.

The correspondences are contained in the script of six different automatic writers.

1. On April 20, 1908, Mrs. Verrall's script referred to "the seven hills" of Rome. Rome, it should be noted, was founded, according to tradition, on April 21st.

On April 27th her script consisted exclusively of three groups of apparently meaningless figures. The figures 3, 7, 6—and no others—were common to all three groups.

On May 8th the script produced a poem, in the metre of Myers' "St. Paul," describing Virgil as a forerunner of Christianity. The poem was obviously inspired by the "Purgatorio," of which Mrs. Verrall had been reading the last four or five cantos. In the poem occur the following lines, which may perhaps be interpreted as referring to Dante's vision of Jacob's Ladder in the "Paradiso":

"He knew the night, he only hoped the morrow,  
Longed for the beauty of the flying feet.

Blest are the messengers that bring the tidings  
Lovely their feet are, lovely is their face,  
Borne far aloft on oarage of their high wings  
Glorious shining in majestic grace."

2. On April 21st, April 27th, May 4th, and May 8th the following piece of mediæval doggerel—a motto of the Tavern Club in Boston, of which Hodgson had been a member—was repeated by Mr. Dorr to Mrs. Piper.

“ Meum est propositum in Taberna mori  
 Et vinum appositum sitienti ori  
 Ut dicant cum venerint Angelorum chori  
 Deus sit propitius isti potatori.”<sup>1</sup>

On the last occasion a fairly correct translation was given by the trance intelligence: *propositum* was, however, translated “habit” and *mori* “custom.”<sup>2</sup>

In the waking stage of the same sitting Mrs. Piper said: “Habit. . . We are Seven. I said Clock. Tick, tick, tick. Stairs. . . Angel Band. Toast, my toast to you. . .”

Asked at the next sitting to explain “We are Seven,” the hand wrote: “That is Wordsworth, but we *were* Seven in the distance as a matter of fact.” And later, “Seven of us—7—Seven.” No explanation was given of “Clock.”

3. On April 29th Miss Verrall wrote: “The figure 3 that seems wanted.”

On May 4th: “8 eight.”

On May 11th her script ran as follows:

A branching tree not a real tree but emblematical. Scrolls in place of leaves.

Jacob's ladder and the angels upon it. What does that mean—

A spinning top many colours but as it spins they are blended into one.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation: “It is my intention to die at the Inn and to have wine served to my thirsty lips, so that the bands of angels may say when they come, ‘May God be propitious to this drinker.’”

<sup>2</sup> As if from *mos, moris*. Mr. Dorr made the same mistake, so that the mistranslation may have been derived from his mind. But compare the mistranslations in the Latin message (above, p. 248 f.).

Mark the simile.



A leaf that hangs down like that and a flower small and white I think and a sweet scent it is a shrub—foreign—not English—Sciola a name like that.

The seven branched candlestick it is an image—the seven churches but these not churches seven candles united in one light and seven colours in the rainbow too.

Many mystic sevens

all will serve

We are seven

Who (?) F. W. H. Myers.

4. On February 14th Mrs. Verrall had sent to another automatist, Mrs. Frith, the following question: "Can R. H. [Hodgson] say what are his associations with the words:

"'Climb the Mount of Blessing'?"

On June 11th Mrs. Frith produced a piece of automatic poetry, apparently in answer to this question. The last stanza ran:

There may I rest, may rest in sight of heaven,  
Pisgah is scaled, the fair and dewy lawn  
Invites my footsteps till the mystic seven  
Lights [*sic*] up the golden candlestick of dawn.

These lines obviously allude to the "Purgatorio," cantos xxviii. and xxix. But Mrs. Frith states that she has read no Dante and did not recognise the allusion.

5. On July 14th Mrs. Holland had a singular dream, of which she sent the account to Miss Johnson:

July 15, 1908.

Last night I dreamt that I was in a large bare room—rather like a studio.

Some one showed me an old note book—or diary—in which was written in a small neat hand:

“ Since in 1872 a dear friend chose as a sign by which to communicate to me the figure 6, I, in my turn, will try, in the time to come, to send the figure 6,—simply the sign of 6.”

On July 23rd, when at sea, she wrote automatically a script, of which I quote the first few lines :

*Thursday, July 23, 1908. At sea.*

There should be three at least in accord and if possible Seven—

The Lady and the learned lady and the maiden of the crystal and the scribe and the professed scribe—and the two new comers—what could be better than that?

The seven persons referred to in the script are apparently Mrs. Forbes, Mrs. Verrall, Miss Verrall, Mrs. Holland, Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Frith, and Mrs. Home.

6. On July 24th Mrs. R. Home, a member of the Society, in the presence of Colonel Taylor and Miss H., under the influence of a “Myers control,” spoke automatically as follows :

Seven times seven and seventy-seven

Send the burden of my words to others.

[Miss H.—To whom shall we send?]

Souls that labour for your earthly wisdom

Send no names.

All these automatisms, as it will be seen, occurred in the spring and early summer of 1908, and the one idea that runs through them all is the number Seven. The idea of numbers is also emphasised in two or three of the scripts; there are unmistakable Dante allusions in the scripts of Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Frith, probably also in Miss Verrall's. There is also a possible Dante allusion (omitted for want of space) in Mrs. Holland's script. So far it might be sup-

posed to be a simple case of cross-correspondence in which Mrs. Verrall, as appears to have been the case in previous instances, played the leading part. It was Mr. Piddington, however, who furnished the clue to the mystery in this case.

On July 13, 1904, Mr. Piddington had written a "posthumous" letter, for the purpose of a test, that it might be read after his death. The contents of the letter he communicated to no one. The letter itself was duly sealed and deposited at the rooms of the Society. After learning of the occurrence of these cross-correspondences Mr. Piddington, in Miss Johnson's presence, opened the letter. It read as follows :

" July 13, 1904.

" If ever I am a spirit, and if I can communicate, I shall endeavour to remember to transmit in some form or other the number Seven.

" As it seems to me not improbable that it may be difficult to transmit an exact word or idea, it may be that, unable to transmit the simple word seven in writing or as a written number, 7, I should try to communicate such things as : ' The seven lamps of architecture,' ' The seven sleepers of Ephesus,' ' Unto seventy times seven,' ' We are seven,' and so forth.

" The reason why I select the word seven is because seven has been a kind of tic with me ever since my early boyhood." <sup>1</sup>

It seems hardly possible to doubt that the idea of *Seven* which runs through all the automatists' utterances was derived ultimately from Mr. Piddington's

<sup>1</sup> To save space I quote only the first three paragraphs of the letter. The remainder of the letter has no further direct bearing on the question. There is no allusion to Dante.



mind. The inference is strengthened by the occurrence of figures in two or three of these scripts, and is practically clinched by Mrs. Holland's singular dream which, except in the substitution of 6 for 7, is a precise reflection from the "posthumous" letter.

But Mr. Piddington tells us that he was not thinking specially of his letter during the three months over which the cross-correspondence extended, though few days of his life passed without his thinking of that subject. It would appear, then, as if some other factor were needed to reinforce Mr. Piddington's unconscious telepathy. That other factor must be sought in Mrs. Verrall's agency. We find traces of her influence in the Dante allusions. An attempt, then, may be made, of course, provisionally and in very crude fashion, to sketch the mental processes which seem to be involved. Mr. Piddington had for years been repeating *Seven* for all the world—that is, all the world within the range of his telepathic influence—to hear. His is a voice crying in the wilderness, however, until it happens that Mrs. Verrall reads the "Divine Comedy," and the idea of *Seven*, already latent in her mind, is reinforced by a series of Dante images. Mrs. Verrall, then, apparently a much more powerful telepathic agent than Mr. Piddington, swells the stream of telepathic influence, and the effects, in the five remaining automatists, rise to the surface of the dream consciousness. The particular form which the transmitted idea assumes in each particular case is determined partly, perhaps, by the relative susceptibility of the subject to the two streams of telepathic influence. But it is in the main, no doubt, a result of the normal association of ideas. Thus Mrs. Piper says "Angel Band" because Mrs.

Verrall after reading Dante has been trying to say "Angels" to her, and the words "Angelorum chori" happened to occur in the Latin doggerel. Mr. Piddington's *Seven* gets itself fixed by recalling Wordsworth's "We are Seven." The words of Longfellow's "Old Clock on the Stairs," floating casually through Mrs. Piper's mind, are arrested by their accidental coincidence with the unusual word *tic* which occurs twice in Mr. Piddington's letter. (This particular coincidence may, however, be due to mere chance.) Miss Verrall embodies the transmitted idea *Seven* in illustrations borrowed primarily from a child's toy, Bentham's "British Flora"—a book quite familiar to her—and the Book of Revelation. But it happens that all the images which her automatic self selects have Dante associations, and may have owed their selection from a crowd of other images floating through her mind to this circumstance. Miss Verrall, again, had read no Dante previously to this experiment.

On some such lines as these we may provisionally sketch out an explanation of this strange series of coincidences. The only hypothetical element involved is the action of telepathy itself. It must not, however, be overlooked that the hypothesis of telepathy is founded on actual experiments, and that there is little direct experimental evidence for the complicated procedure here supposed. The experimental evidence, however, generally speaking, indicates that telepathic influences, whatever their nature, act most freely in the sphere of the automatic or dream consciousness. And we find a rough experimental parallel to the kind of double influence here presupposed in some experiments made nearly a generation ago by Professor

Richet, and, unfortunately, never repeated. Those who took part in the experiments, it should be explained, were all M. Richet's personal friends. Three of the experimenters, one or more among them being "mediums" or automatists—that is, persons whose unconscious muscular action had been proved capable of tilting a table—were seated at a table. Behind their backs, at a second table, was seated an "operator," who incessantly let his pencil travel backwards and forwards along a printed alphabet. The alphabet was further concealed from the mediums by a screen. Whenever the table tilted a bell rang, and the letter indicated by the pencil at that moment was recorded. Under these conditions M. Richet himself, standing apart both from table and operator, would think of a word, or select a word in the dictionary, and his thought would be spelled out by the table letter by letter.<sup>1</sup>

In this curious experiment we have to assume a double telepathic process of some kind. The simplest explanation is that the "mediums" were influenced

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Philosophique*, December, 1844, pp. 649 ff. An account of the experiments will also be found in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ii. pp. 247 ff. The results attained were altogether beyond chance. The only possible explanation by normal means that occurs to me is that M. Richet may have watched the alphabet, and that the unconscious variations in his breathing may have given a hint when the right letter was reached. This explanation was suggested by M. Gomalez (see *Journal S.P.R.* for September, 1885). M. Richet, in his account of the experiments, unfortunately does not expressly say that he refrained from watching the alphabet. But it cannot be thought probable that he neglected so obvious a precaution. It is much to be desired, however, that further experiments should be conducted on similar lines.

both by Richet and by the "operator." Alternatively the operator may have received Richet's thought telepathically, and have telepathically influenced the mediums to tilt. In either explanation we seem to find a rudimentary form of the more complex process demonstrated in these recent cross-correspondences.

But whatever the explanation of this particular series of coincidences, I can see no evidence whatever to justify the assumption, even provisionally, of a directing intelligence other than those of the automatists concerned.<sup>1</sup> It would appear, on the contrary, that this case has important bearings upon the interpretation of the evidence as a whole. Not only does it vindicate, in the least equivocal fashion, the action of telepathy from the living, but it further invalidates by anticipation all the evidence for the agency of the dead which might have been derived from "post-humous" letters, and has thus deprived us of what would have seemed an important, though not, of course, a crucial, test.

<sup>1</sup> See, however, Miss Johnson's comments on the case, *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. pp. 255—63.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE STAGE SETTING OF THE TRANCE

HITHERTO little has been said of what may be called the machinery of the trance communications. But it is not possible to estimate the significance of those communications without a careful consideration of the form in which they are delivered. Mrs. Piper's mediumship, as already stated, originated in some visits paid by her in 1884 to a professional medium, Mr. J. R. Cocke. At her second visit she fell into trance and was controlled by an Indian girl who gave the name Chlorine. Thereafter Mrs. Piper was inspired by many of the famous dead—Mrs. Siddons, Sebastian Bach, Longfellow, Commodore Vanderbilt, and an Italian artist, Loretta Ponchini. Mrs. Siddons recited a scene from "Macbeth"; Longfellow gave some verses of his own composition; and Loretta Ponchini made some drawings. Sebastian Bach at first assumed the general direction of the trance, but afterwards gave way to Phinuit, who purported to be identical with the spirit of the same name (pronounced Finnē), who had controlled Mr. Cocke.<sup>1</sup> Phinuit was in control for the greater part of the time during Mrs. Piper's first visit to this country, occasionally giving way to other spirits related to the sitters; and he remained in control, I

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. viii. pp. 46, 47.



believe, until 1892, when he was ousted by George Pelham. G. P. in the winter of 1896-7 gave place in turn to Imperator and his band of spirits.

Mrs. Thompson was controlled chiefly by the spirit of a daughter Nelly, who died in infancy some years since, and by Mrs. Cartwright, the lady who kept the school at which Mrs. Thompson was educated. Nelly, as already stated, first appeared at the physical séances held in 1897 and 1898.

Obviously the question whether these controls are what they assume to be has some bearing upon the interpretation of the later evidence. Now, in most cases where the dissociation of consciousness is pronounced or habitual, as in spirit mediumship and other forms of spontaneous automatism, in deep hypnotic trance, in cases of secondary personality, &c., we find that the new consciousness is apt to assume a new name. Into the psycho-physiological explanation of this peculiarity we need not now enter. Suffice it to say that the change in the consciousness is presumably in all cases conditioned by physiological changes which sometimes, as when local anæsthesiæ or disturbances of muscular control occur, are of a fairly obvious kind. Even the hand of an automatic writer, who is otherwise apparently normal, is frequently found to be insensitive to pain whilst in the act of writing. There can be no question in most cases that the assumption of a new name is merely, so to speak, a kind of illegitimate inference drawn by the transformed consciousness; it feels itself a new creature, and demands, therefore, a new name. Nobody would maintain that the Mrs. Piper of twenty-five years ago was really controlled by Chlorine or Sebastian Bach.

Indian maidens have always been fashionable in American spiritualist circles. So have been the names of the mighty dead. There is no reason to doubt that these earlier impersonations, at any rate, were wholly the creations of the medium's dream consciousness. In persons of some mental instability such dreams may even take possession of the waking organism. Continental observers have described many cases of the kind amongst persons certainly not to be classed as insane. I have myself come across a case which is perhaps worth quoting as having some analogy with the impersonations of the dead given by Mrs. Piper and Mrs. Thompson. In the case to be cited, however, the man impersonated was alive. I received the account of the episode from the young woman herself, whom I will call A. B., and from her brother. The account is taken from my notes made at the time :

Miss A. B., a young woman of about thirty, experienced a sudden and demonstrative attachment for a man, C. D., living in the same neighbourhood. The affair attracted some unpleasant notoriety, and the young man, who had apparently acted a rather passive part throughout, abruptly discontinued the acquaintance. Miss A. B. continued, however, to cherish the belief that the man had been influenced by the malice of her enemies, and that he was still profoundly attached to her. A few weeks after the breach she felt one evening a curious feeling in the throat, as of choking—the prelude probably, under ordinary circumstances, to an attack of hysteria. This feeling was succeeded by involuntary movements of the hands and a fit of long-continued and apparently causeless sobbing. Then, in presence of a member of her family, she became, in her own belief, possessed by the spirit of C. D., personating his words and gestures and speaking in his character. After this date she continually held conversation, as she believes, with C. D.'s spirit; "he" sometimes speaking aloud through her mouth, sometimes conversing

with her in the inner voice. Occasionally "he" wrote messages through her hand, and I have the testimony of a member of her family that the writing so produced resembled that of C. D. Occasionally also A. B. had visions, in which she claimed to see C. D. and what he was doing at the moment. At other times she professed to hear him speaking or to understand by some inner sympathy his feelings and thoughts.

A significant feature in this case is that A. B.'s dream had imposed not merely on herself, but on her brother, who related the facts to me, and also apparently on one other member of her family.

But the classic case of spirit possession in modern times is that recorded by Professor Flournoy in his book "Des Indes à la Planète Mars":

Miss Héléne Smith (the name is fictitious) was born about 1863. Her parents are well educated and healthy; Héléne herself as a child was quiet and dreamy, and had occasional visions, but was, on the whole, not specially remarkable. She is, to all outward appearance, at the present time healthy even to robustness. From the age of fifteen she has been employed in a large shop in Geneva, and holds a position of some responsibility. It is in 1892 that her real history begins. In that year she was persuaded by some friends to join a Spiritualist circle. She soon proved to be a medium: she saw visions and heard voices. Moreover, there were movements of the table, and "apports" of flowers and shells traceable to her mediumship. In the course of two or three years her mediumship developed on the normal lines. She passed at every séance into a state of trance, in which she had clairvoyant visions and delivered messages purporting to proceed from deceased friends of the sitters. She was from time to time controlled by spirits of the famous dead. Some of her earliest trances were under the guidance and inspiration of Victor Hugo. Within a few months, however, the spirit of the poet—too late, indeed, for his own reputation, for he had already perpetrated some verses—was

expelled by a more masterful demon, who called himself Leopold. The new comer was at first somewhat reticent on his own past, and, when urgently questioned, was apt to take refuge in moral platitudes. Later, however, he revealed himself as Giuseppe Balsamo, Count Cagliostro. It then appeared that in Hélène herself was reincarnated the hapless Queen Marie Antoinette, and that others of the mortals present represented Mirabeau, Philip of Orleans, and the Princess de Lamballe. Cagliostro, "*ce cher sorcier*," attended only in his discarnate state. Of the high courtly functions then held in nineteenth-century Geneva, with all their ghostly memories of past splendours and tragedies, there is no space to speak. But from M. Flournoy's spirited description it is clear that the reincarnated queen was lacking neither in wit, grace, nor dignity.

At times Hélène's memory in the trance went back to a still remoter past. As Simandini, daughter of an Arab sheikh in the fifteenth century, she had been courted by the princely Sivrouka, lord of the fortress of Tchandranguiri, in the province of Kanara, Hindustan. She had enjoyed as his wife many years of married happiness, adorned by the chaste but passionate devotion of the Fakir Kanga, and had finally proved her fidelity by expiring, in wifely fashion, amid the flames of her lord's funeral pyre. All the scenes of this forgotten history were enacted in lifelike tableau before M. Flournoy and his friends, and duly interpreted for their benefit by the serviceable Leopold-Cagliostro. It should be added that the entranced medium, in her rôle of a princess of the Orient, wrote a sentence or two in passable Arabic and spoke a few words of Hindustani.

It is Hélène's extra-planetary experiences, however, which have excited most attention, and which furnished to the attendants at her circle the most convincing proofs of her dealings with the spiritual world. In November, 1894, the spirit of the entranced medium was wafted—not without threatenings of sea-sickness—through the cosmic void, to arrive eventually on the planet Mars. Thereafter, night after night, she described to the listening circle the people of our neighbour planet—their food, dress, and ways of life. At times she drew pictures of the inhabitants—human and animal—of their houses, bridges, and other edifices,

and of the surrounding landscape. Later she both spoke and wrote freely in the Martian language. From the writings reproduced in M. Flournoy's book it is clear that the characters of the Martian script are unlike any in use on earth, and that the words (of which a translation is furnished) bear no resemblance, superficially at least, to any known tongue. The spirits—for several dwellers upon Mars used Héléne's organism to speak and write through—delivered themselves with freedom and fluency, and were consistent in their usage both of the spoken and the written words. In fact, Martian, as used by the entranced Héléne, has many of the characteristics of a genuine language; and it is not surprising that some of the onlookers, who may have hesitated over the authenticity of the other revelations, were apparently convinced that these Martian utterances were beyond the common order of nature.

M. Flournoy, in his masterly analysis of the case, shows that the whole of these marvellously consistent and lifelike impersonations, with the incorporation in the case of the Royal cycle of much authentic history, and the invention in the Martian cycle of an entirely new language, were simply the developed products of the medium's childish daydreams. Bit by bit he traces all the elements in the several romances to incidents in Héléne's history, and gives the date at which each cycle was originated; the Martian cycle, for instance, originated in early childhood when the medium knew no other language but her own; for the Martian language, marvellous work of art though it is, is obviously modelled exclusively on French.

Now, Phinuit appears to be a creation of the same order as Simandini and Leopold-Balsamo-Cagliostro. He was transferred, as we have seen, from a professional medium to Mrs. Piper. We first make his acquaintance in the questionable company of Chlorine and Mrs. Siddons. He claims to have been a doctor,



but does not know the names of the Latin or French drugs which he prescribes, and cannot recognise common medicinal herbs when shown to him. He claims to have been a Frenchman, though his knowledge of French is apparently limited to a few common phrases and a slight accent, which frequently proved serviceable in the old days in disguising a bad shot at a proper name. His ignorance of French he has explained as being due to his having passed the later years of his life at Metz, where there were many English residents. He has given his full name, with particulars of his life and education at Paris, but no trace of any person of his name can be found. On being more closely questioned he betrayed some uncertainty whether he had been born at Metz or Marseilles, and finally came to the conclusion that his name was not Phinuit at all, but Jean Alaen Sciville, and that he had never had any connection with Dr. Cocke.<sup>1</sup>

But it is to be observed that the other controls endorse Phinuit's claim to a substantial existence. Thus the Gurney control talked much to Sir Oliver Lodge in 1889 about him :

"Dr. Phinuit is a peculiar type of man . . . he is eccentric and quaint, but good-hearted. I wouldn't do the things he does for anything ; he lowers himself sometimes ; it is a great pity. . . . A high type of man couldn't do the work he does ; but he is a good-hearted old fellow . . . a shrewd doctor, he knows his own business thoroughly." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Hodgson's account of the Phinuit impersonation, *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. viii. pp. 50, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii. 153, 158.

The case of Imperator presents further difficulties. Imperator—"Impersonator," as Professor Hyslop, or, perhaps, Professor Hyslop's printer, has felicitously christened him<sup>1</sup>—is one of a band of lofty spirits, Rector, Prudens, and Mentor being amongst the other members, who purported to control the late Stainton Moses. Now, Stainton Moses, as we have already seen, was a physical medium, and as Imperator and his company can hardly be acquitted of connivance with their medium's doings, the admission of their claims to substantiality would still further complicate Mrs. Piper's case by involving it with the whole question of these presumably deceptive phenomena.

But even those who place most faith in the trance communications generally find it difficult to believe that Imperator and Rector are what they assume to be, especially since they are unable to give the real names of the persons whom the Imperator and Rector of Stainton Moses claimed to represent.<sup>2</sup> Thus Sir Oliver Lodge writes: "I conjecture, however, that whatever relationship may exist between these personages and the corresponding ones of Stainton Moses there is little or no identity."<sup>3</sup>

But, again, just as Phinuit's claim was endorsed by the Gurney control, so Imperator and Rector are recognised as real personages by the Hodgson and Myers controls. There is another point referred to by Sir Oliver Lodge which probably has some bearing on

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the American S.P.R.*, March, 1907, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> The names were known only to two or three intimate friends of Stainton Moses.

<sup>3</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiii. p. 235. Professor W. James's view is that they are all probably dream creations of Mrs. Piper (*ibid.*, p. 3).

the question. In Mrs. Piper's earlier trances there purported to be direct changes of control. Phinuit would get out and Gurney would get in ; and these changes of control were marked by appropriate drama. Now, even in the latest trances there are, occasionally, apparent changes of control accompanying the appearance of different communicators, but the communicators expressly state that in the latest trances Rector always controls the medium's organism. "So it would appear that the change of control claims to be now usually dramatic rather than real." <sup>1</sup>

Of Mrs. Thompson's trance dramatisations it is not necessary to say much. "The characteristics of the respective personalities," writes Mrs. Verrall, "are not very marked : all bear strong resemblances to that of Mrs. Thompson herself. The actual voice is hardly to be distinguished from hers. The words and phrases, so far as they are in any way distinctive, are such as she herself uses in the normal state." <sup>2</sup> Mrs. Verrall recognises, however, that the several impersonations produce on the sitter the impression of individuality and independent existence.

From the nature of the case little opportunity can be afforded for testing the genuineness of the Nelly personality, nor has any attempt, so far as I am aware, been made to test the impersonation in the other cases. We have seen already under what circumstances and in what company Nelly made her first appearance. The band of spirits who, under the leadership of Peter

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge, in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiii. p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. p. 90 ; vol. xviii. pp. 206 and 266.

Wharton, controlled Mrs. Thompson's early trances belong, no doubt, to the same family as the band which appeared early in Mrs. Piper's career and ultimately gave way to Phinuit ; but Mrs. Siddons and her associates were innocent of spirit lights, apports, and materialisations. To do her justice, Nelly is not ashamed of her past ; she admits having knocked and shaken a table "before she knew Mr. Myers," and she has expressed her intention of materialising herself some day.<sup>1</sup>

It would not, then, appear that there are any external characteristics by which we can discriminate between impersonations representing themselves as our deceased friends and such other figures of the medium's trance as Phinuit and Imperator ; nor can we again distinguish, except by their greater consistency and permanence, between Phinuit and Imperator, and such transient creations as Mrs. Siddons, Loretta Ponchini, and the Indian maiden Chlorine ; and these last figures link Mrs. Piper with the ordinary medium and her band of spirit controls—Shelley, Benjamin Franklin, the Duke of Kent, Aristotle, Apollos Munn, Bacon, Swedenborg, Moses, Paul, and names more sacred than these.

And there are other indications that the trance communications through these later mediums are all of the same fundamental kinship. The trance machinery is the same, and the curious evasiveness, or, to use a less invidious term, suggestibility, is the same. At moments when the "light" is good we have flashes of emphatic unambiguous utterance, often thoroughly characteristic of the supposed speaker. But when the

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xviii. pp. 266—7.

conditions are unfavourable the whole manner of the communication is hesitating, tentative, and strongly suggestive of fishing. Phinuit's fishing and his ambiguous pronunciation of proper names, a procedure so constantly repeated that it can hardly have been fortuitous, were notorious during his tenure of office. Professor Shaler, who had a fairly successful séance in 1894, calls him a "preposterous scoundrel."<sup>1</sup>

Now that the communications through Mrs. Piper are nearly all written instead of being delivered orally, opportunities of this particular kind are necessarily more restricted, but they still occur; for though the writing can, by those who are conversant with it, be deciphered without serious risk of ambiguity, it is by no means easy to read, and this leaves it open to the incautious sitter in his attempts at interpretation to give a hint of the answer desired. Thus, at one of Miss Bancroft's sittings the Hodgson control writes:

"Don't you remember how I had to laugh at you laugh on that boat about that boat"

The last word was deciphered by the sitter as "hat," and she therefore replied, "Whose hat blew off?" The control wrote: "My hat. Do you not remember the day it blew off?" and then proceeded to connect the incident of the hat blowing off with a fishing party. But Miss Bancroft can remember nothing definite about a hat, and the whole incident was apparently suggested by her misreading of the word.<sup>2</sup>

Again, at a later sitting, Professor Newbold, in asking the Hodgson control to recall the incidents of a day spent at the seaside, adds:

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 524.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii. pp. 49—50.



After that what did we do?

R. H.—We went and got some—let me think—

W. R. N.—I can't read that, Dick.

R. H.—A drink—drink. I asked you to have cigar.  
Cigar—and something else. [P. 63.]

Now, the cigar was correct, but the drink was not; and the word appears to have been suggested by the sitter's attempts to decipher the word "think."

There are several instances of the same kind in the prolonged series of sittings which Professor Hyslop had with Mrs. Piper in 1898-99. Consider this extract from the first sitting:

Professor Hyslop.—What is the last sentence?

Control.—I am with her.

Professor H.—With whom?

Control.—Yes, I have A—A . [Last word undecipherable; possibly either Alice or Annie.]

Professor H.—Is it Alice?

Control.—Alice.

Professor H.—Alice who?

Control.—I do not say Alice, I say Annie.

It need hardly be said that "Annie" had a meaning for the sitter, while Alice had none.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in another part of the same record we read that the word "mother" was written five times, but "a close re-examination of the automatic writing indicates that the first of these words looks like mother; the others look like brother" (p. 316).

On another occasion the sitter asks: "Who passed out soon after you?" The answer given is: "Mother [query brother] is here also" (p. 331).

Again, at another sitting the control (assumed to be Professor Hyslop's father) asks: "Do you mean

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 607.

F.?" Professor Hyslop replies: "Yes, father, I mean F. if you can tell the rest." The control replies: "I can remember very well. F R A D" (p. 338).

In commenting on this Professor Hyslop remarks that the symbol printed as D bore in the original writing a strong resemblance to N K. The brother's name, in fact, was "Frank"; but the ingenious portmanteau word framed by the spirit would apparently have stood equally well for Fred.

But the difficulty in interpreting the writing is only one and quite a minor source of uncertainty in the trance utterance. The whole machinery of communication, as interpreted to us by the controls, is directly productive of ambiguities of many kinds. The communicating "spirits" do not, at any rate in recent years, profess to assume direct control over Mrs. Piper's organism. They used to dictate what they wanted to say to Phinuit or G. P.; they now dictate to Rector. This procedure, whether it really represents any psychical fact or is merely part of the machinery of the medium's trance, at any rate affords a cloak for many mistakes and an excuse for many ambiguities, to be interpreted according to the sitter's prepossessions. The Piper-Myers found a plausible excuse for his difficulty in interpreting the Latin message on the ground that Rector knew no Latin. Again, when he had learned that "copyright" was an incorrect answer, he explained that he did not intend to say "copyright," but "copies." Throughout these séances Rector's difficulty in hearing and interpreting is a constant feature. But we can scarcely regard Rector as anything but a symbolic figure invented by the medium's subconscious imagination.

In other ways, too, the machinery of the trance communications is, unfortunately, if not designedly, ambiguous. With all automatists alike the communications tend to be fragmentary and incoherent; they are also generally indirect in form, tentative, and ambiguous in their application. At even the most conspicuously successful séances with Mrs. Piper the precisely definite statements admitting of but one interpretation are comparatively few. Personal messages are apt to bear no label either of origin or destination; names and allusions are thrown out haphazard to be taken up and identified as the sitter wills. Thus, to take one or two illustrations out of many, Professor Hyslop explains that at one period of his first sitting with Mrs. Piper he, at the time, supposed himself to be communicating with his brother's spirit, but later saw reason, purely from internal evidence, to suppose that his father, not his brother, was the communicator.<sup>1</sup> In other words, he found a head to fit the cap.

Or, to take another case, at Mr. Hyslop's second sitting the control announces that there is a little girl's spirit trying to find her mother. He then proceeds: "Who is Ruth?" Hyslop replies: "I do not know Ruth."

Control.—"Not to thee, friend, but to thee" (*i.e.*, Hodgson, who was also present at the sitting).

Another illustration of the same procedure will be found in the introduction of the name "Margaret" without context at the sitting of December 28, 1905, when Hodgson's ring was mentioned. If Margaret had happened to be the name of the lady who had given the ring, this would have been regarded as a

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. pp. 22, 307, 361.

remarkably good test. As it is, the name having been introduced without definite context, it does not create the impression of a failure.

If we were dealing with the ordinary professional clairvoyant who describes before a roomful of her clients the apparition of a sweet-faced widow lady, or an old gentleman with silver hair, or some other typical figure, we should say that the conditions were cunningly devised to insure that her clairvoyant descriptions should never fail to find a billet somewhere. But really these ambiguous messages dealt in by the entranced Mrs. Piper widen the scope of chance coincidence in much the same way, though, no doubt, to a less extent. Obviously the cap is more likely to prove a good fit if it is not aimed at any particular head.

In short, where the context is not given the imagination of the sitter has to supply it, and the process bears a very close analogy to the corresponding process in the material world of building up a perception out of faint and inadequate sensory data. The result may be a visual image corresponding to the half-guessed reality, or it may be altogether wide of the mark—an illusion, in short. But the mental process is much the same, and it is often impossible to say just where the line which divides reality from illusion is overstepped. That it is sometimes overstepped will be clear to the reader who summons up the courage to study Professor Hyslop's monumental report already referred to. Here are two specimens of his interpretation of ambiguous utterances: Professor Hyslop's father purporting to communicate referred to a visit, in company with his son, to the *mountains* and then a trip to the *lake* after leaving

the *camp*. The statement is admitted to be false in every particular ; but Professor Hyslop and his father did once go together to a town called Champaign (generally pronounced Champagne, and so pronounced, according to the widow, by Mr. Hyslop senior, though Professor Hyslop thinks that he often called it *Campaign*). After this they went to Chicago, and naturally visited the lake-shore whilst in the city. Professor Hyslop accordingly suggests a possible reconstruction of the trance statement as follows :

[Mr. Hyslop senior is supposed to be dictating to Rector, who is writing through Mrs. Piper's hand.] " I am thinking of the time when I went into [father says Illinois. Rector does not understand this, and asks if he means hilly. Father says "No ! Prairies." Rector does not understand. Father says "No mountains." Rector understands this as "No ! mountains !" and continues] the mountains for a change with him and the trip we had to the lake after we left [father says Champaign. Rector understands Camp, and continues] the Camp." †

Or, to take another illustration : The Hyslop control is asked if he remembers Samuel Cooper ; the reply is that he was an old friend in the West, and that they used to have long talks on philosophical subjects. Of Samuel Cooper, an old neighbour of Mr. Hyslop's, the statement is false. But there was a Dr. *Joseph* Cooper, whom Mr. Hyslop knew, and with whom he may have conversed or corresponded on theological questions in 1858. It is true that Joseph is not the same name as Samuel, that theology is not precisely philosophy, and that Dr. Cooper did not live west of Mr. Hyslop, but, unfortunately, east. There was, however, a Cooper Memorial College founded after his

† *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvi. p. 409.



death, of which Mr. Hyslop may have been thinking, or the mention of talks on philosophy may have been intended to apply to correspondence on theology with Professor Hyslop's uncle. "The misunderstanding would probably be Rector's" (p. 500). On the whole, Professor Hyslop thinks the incident "has considerable interest and importance" (p. 410).

These are, no doubt, extreme instances, and it is not intended to suggest that any of the interpretations of these fragmentary utterances suggested in the present reports fall so flagrantly wide of the mark. But there are many passages where I have felt, in reading through page after page, as if I were battling my way through cobwebs. One cannot say that there is nothing in the argument, because one cannot get near enough to it to grasp it, to measure its strength and its weakness. At no particular point, it may be, can one assert with confidence—this inference is quite unjustifiable, or that interpretation is wholly supplied by the editor's imagination. If an editor has to deal with fragmentary and incoherent utterances, which are yet presumed to have a meaning, he is clearly entitled to introduce order and coherence if he can. And the process inevitably requires the use of a sympathetic imagination. How are we to decide at what point his imagination becomes too sympathetic? Let the reader who cares to pursue the subject study the accounts of the *Light in the West* and the *Star, Hope, and Browning* cases: or the chain of reasoning by which "Plotinus" is associated with Homer's "Iliad."<sup>1</sup>

More significant even than these possibly unde-

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxii. pp. 59—77, 130—6, 241—81, and elsewhere.

signed ambiguities of utterance are the evasive and disingenuous explanations frequently given. We have seen that Phinuit explained his present ignorance of French on the plea that he, a Frenchman, had passed the later years of his life in Metz amongst the English residents there. So the G. P. control evaded the test of giving two proper names on the plea that if he gave them then in the presence of a sitter who knew them it would be attributed to telepathy, and later gave them incorrectly. So the Hodgson control offered a ridiculous and palpably false explanation of the mistake made in giving "Huldah" for Hannah. In an analogous case, also through Mrs. Piper, a lady who was known to her friends as Kitty gave her name in the first instance as Kate. When at length she gave the right name she was asked why she called herself Kate before, and answered: "Because I did it for Rector's understanding."<sup>1</sup>

So, again, the Hodgson control, asked by Professor Newbold as a test to recall a particular conversation about his (the sitter's) work, replied: "Oh, yes, I recall you said you would like to give it up." Professor Newbold replied: "No, I did not say that." And the trance writing continued, as if to finish an uncompleted sentence: "Not for anything!"

Thus the case stands. The automatic utterances, and especially the trance utterances, show all the characteristics of automatic utterance generally, incoherence, vagueness, ambiguity, evasiveness. The whole elaborate machinery of control has the effect, whether designed with that end or not, of increasing the uncertainty of interpretation and affording a cloak

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiii. pp. 272-3.

for mistakes. The latest controls are connected by many binding links with those who have gone before. They vouch for them, and are vouched for in turn. Dr. Hodgson, I believe, continued to regard Phinuit's substantial existence as an open question, but Phinuit was always very human. It is more difficult to take seriously the claims of Imperator, with his sacerdotal verbiage, his lofty pretensions of sanctity, and his signature of the cross. As we have seen, Sir Oliver Lodge regards them as dubious.

Professor William James, in his report on the Hodgson control, has a striking passage on the interpretation of the phenomena in the light of history :

“ I myself can perfectly well imagine spirit-agency, and find my mind vacillating about it curiously. When I take the phenomena piecemeal, the notion that Mrs. Piper's subliminal self should keep her sitters apart as expertly as it does, remembering its past dealings with each of them so well, not mixing their communications more, and all the while humbugging them so profusely, is quite compatible with what we know of the dream-life of hypnotised subjects. Their consciousness, narrowed to one suggested kind of operation, shows remarkable skill in that operation. If we suppose Mrs. Piper's dream-life once for all to have had the notion suggested to it that it must personate spirits to sitters, the fair degree of virtuosity it shows need not, I think, surprise us. But I find that when I ascend from the details to the whole meaning of the phenomenon, and especially when I connect the Piper case with all the other cases I know of automatic writing and mediumship, and with the whole record of spirit-possession in human history, the notion that such an immense current of experience, complex in so many ways, should spell out absolutely nothing but the word ‘ humbug ’ acquires a character of unlikeliness. The notion that so many men and women, in all other respects honest enough, should have this preposterous monkeying self annexed to their personality seems to me so weird that the spirit theory

immediately takes on a more probable appearance. The spirits, if spirits there be, must indeed work under incredible complications and falsifications, but at least if they are present some honesty is left in a whole department of the universe which otherwise is run by pure deception. The more I realise the quantitative massiveness of the phenomenon and its complexity, the more incredible it seems to me that in a world all of whose vaster features we are in the habit of considering to be *sincere* at least, however brutal, this feature should be wholly constituted of insincerity."

It is with reluctance that I venture to express an opinion opposed to that of Professor James. There is no living man whose utterances on this subject carry greater weight. But the lesson which I have learned from history is precisely the reverse. Some eight or nine years ago, in reviewing the whole course of the spiritualistic movement, I wrote that "Mrs. Piper would be a much more convincing apparition if she could have come to us out of the blue, instead of trailing behind her a nebulous ancestry of magnetic somnambules, witch-ridden children, and ecstatic nuns."<sup>1</sup> A large amount of evidence for and against the spiritualist theory has been accumulated in the intervening years, but the essential features of the problem remain unchanged. We have still to deal with the same protean figures—vengeful human ghosts, familiar spirits of Shaman or wizard, angels from the abyss, devils released from Jewish or mediæval hells, oracles of Olympian deities, spirits of angels and prophets, spirits of earth, air, and fire, spirits of the damned, spirits on furlough from purgatory, spirits floating in a Swedenborgian limbo, ghosts of fleas and archangels, decaying astral shells, spirits of the seven celestial spheres, spirits clothed in luminiferous ether—they have

<sup>1</sup> "Modern Spiritualism," vol. ii. p. 361.

been with us since the first syllable of recorded time, and generation after generation they have shaped themselves to suit the changing fashion of the hour, the hidden or hinted fears and hopes of those who put their trust in them. To dismiss the whole matter as fraud would be not only uncharitable, but a blunder ; it would be to misinterpret the essential nature of the phenomenon. Whatever sham or make-believe there may be in these still—after so many millenniums—undeciphered messages, we may be sure that the blame, if blame is appropriate at all, does not lie wholly on the spirit- or devil-possessed. From Pythian priestess to modern clairvoyant she has been an almost passive instrument to be played upon by minds other than her own, by the hopes and fears of the whole race of man.

Mr. Piddington's scholarly commentary has not exhausted the significance of the legend of Ceyx and Alcyone. The central incident in the legend is the despatch of Morpheus, the god of dreams, to carry the news of Ceyx's death to the widowed queen. Morpheus fulfils his mission by assuming the form of the drowned man, and, that he may secure credence for his message, he assures the dreaming Alcyone that it is indeed her husband's spirit which is addressing her, and backs up his claim by mimicking the voice and the very gestures of the dead king :

“ Non hæc tibi nuntiat auctor  
Ambiguus ; non ista vagis rumoribus audis ;  
Ipse ego fata tibi præsens mea naufragus edo.  
\*                    \*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Adjicit his vocem Morpheus, quam conjugis illa  
Crederet esse sui. Fletus quoque fundere veros  
Visus erat ; gestumque manus Ceycis habebant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ovid's "Metamorphoses," xi. 666—73.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

IN view of what has been said in the last chapter it must be recognised that there is a very strong *prima facie* presumption that all the personalities claiming to communicate through Mrs. Piper and other automatists proceed from the same manufactory as Mrs. Siddons and Loretta Ponchini. If a man came to us with a letter from a fellow-countryman languishing in a Spanish prison and offered, on our providing the small sum needed for the release of the prisoner, to give us a share in the hidden treasure known to his friend alone, we might, through mistaken clemency or mere inertia, be content with showing him to the door. But if he should approach us for the second time with a similar tale, varying only the locality and the incidents, we should unquestionably call in the police. We are offered a heavier bribe than Spanish gold, and though we ought not to lose sight of the enormous improbabilities involved in the claim, yet the momentous issues at stake may, no doubt, be held to justify a suspension of judgment until the further investigations which are still proceeding have shed fresh light upon the problem.

In fact, the investigators themselves now recognise that the primitive theory of possession, the theory advocated in a modified form by Dr. Hodgson<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> In his report on the Piper communications prior to 1898. See *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii.

still held by most Spiritualists, can no longer be defended. They have substituted for it a theory of telepathic interaction between the mind of the automatist and other minds, of the living or of the dead. The result is a compound, in which the different elements can only be separated by patient analysis. Thus, to quote Miss Johnson :

“ I will then compare the script to chemical compounds of two or more elements which are found in different proportions in the various compounds. Thus, if we call the automatists P. and V., and the hypothetical external intelligence X., we may get in the one script such compounds as PX, or  $P_2X$ , or  $PX_2$ , and in the other VX, &c. ; or we may get in either of them such compounds as PVX,  $P_2V_3X$ , &c. We may also get such compounds as PV, or  $PV_2$ ; or we get the elements P and V. by themselves. The one element that we never get alone is X.”<sup>1</sup>

But the propounders of this theory do not seem to realise the full implications of their admission. We cannot simply drop the theory of possession as if the facts on which it was originally based had never existed, and then proceed to balance the successes against the failures, as in a telepathic experiment. If these impersonations, as is now admitted, are not what they pretend to be, they are shams, and we are faced with a gigantic system of make-believe. In a telepathic experiment, if we found the percipient continually trying to cheat, we should drop his acquaintance, and betake ourselves to an honest man. That course is not open to us

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. p. 262. Mr. Piddington, in a letter to me, expresses his general agreement with this view.

here, because the automatist without reproach has not yet been found. All alike, it would seem, are engaged day in, day out, in weaving their dream romances. But, again, in a telepathic experiment the particular form of deception here encountered would not affect the result. In a telepathic experiment we are concerned only with excluding the action of the subject's normal senses. If, under such conditions, he correctly names the concealed card, the result may be due to reading our thoughts, it may be due to communion with the world soul, or to the direct interposition of the Deity. In any event, we have agreed provisionally to call the result telepathy. But in the cases before us we have to decide between one of two unknown causes, and all the sympathies of the automatist have been proved to be actively engaged on one side. That fact surely ought to be kept prominently before us in every attempt to interpret these baffling utterances. But I see no proof in these reports that there is any adequate recognition of it, or any realisation of the extreme improbability involved in the assumption that one out of ten thousand lay figures, in outward appearance indistinguishable from all the other lay figures, should for a passing moment be endowed with life, and should then again sink back amongst the crowd of lifeless mockeries ; for that, and nothing less, seems to be the implication in some of the arguments put forward. Take the following case :

On July 13, 1904, at 11.15 a.m., the same day, and possibly the same hour, in which Mr. Piddington wrote the posthumous letter referred to in Chapter VI. in connection with the *Sevens* case, Mrs. Verrall produced the following script :

[After some nonsense Latin and Greek words.]

But that is not right—it is something contemporary that you are to record—note the hour—in London half the message has come.

I have long told you of the contents of the envelope—Myers' sealed envelope left with Lodge. [Here follows a statement as to the contents of this envelope, quoted in full in Mrs. Verrall's report on her script, *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xx. pp. 424—5; also a similar statement about a sealed envelope left by Professor Sidgwick. The script continues :]

I don't know what you want more—why can't you act on this? You ask more and more tests and it is hard to see why.

Helen could probably give the contents of the envelope too if you want confirmation. Tell her to write down a reference and see what she puts. We will try to give it her to-day. Some one will speak of it to her—will that do for you, O skeptics! Surely Piddington will see that this is enough and should be acted upon. F. W. H. M.

The whole message, it will be seen, an unusually coherent one, purports to be inspired by the Myers control. The first paragraph appears to refer to Mr. Piddington's contemporary letter, of which Mrs. Verrall could have had no knowledge by normal means. The latter part of the script professes to give the substance of a posthumous letter written by Myers himself. The statements made in this part of the script proved, when the letter was opened, to be entirely wide of the mark.<sup>1</sup> This part, then, presumably belonged to the lay figure. But Miss Johnson, in commenting on the passage, thinks that the phraseology of the first part of the message can hardly have come from Mr. Piddington's mind, and that it rather suggests the operation of another intelligence (*i.e.*, the Myers control).<sup>2</sup> But if Mrs. Verrall's dream-self can so skil-

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiv. p. 256.

fully work up the raw material originating in her own mind so as to fit into her dream romance, why should it be supposed incapable of working up raw material presumably received from the outside?

The theory can only fairly be tested by careful and, so far as possible, dispassionate study of the utterances as a whole. The automatists unquestionably show that they possess information which could not have reached their consciousness by normal means, and it is in tracing this information to its source that the main interest of the inquiry and the main burden of proof will be found. Whether the faculty of super-normal perception constitutes a real difference between Mrs. Piper and the majority of her predecessors it is difficult to say. Clairvoyant powers have been widely claimed for other mediums and magnetic sensitives, but the imperfection of the records prevents us, as a rule, from testing the claim. There is, however, one conspicuous exception, and it is a peculiarly instructive one. One Alphonse Cahagnet, a French cabinet-maker in the middle years of last century, had a magnetic (*i.e.*, hypnotic) subject, Adèle, who granted interviews much after the fashion of Mrs. Piper's early séances. Strangers would be introduced to Adèle in the trance, and she would profess to see their dead friends and would give copious information about their personal appearance, dress, character, disposition, and the disease from which they died. The information given rarely went beyond this, but within these limits it seems to have been remarkably accurate. Cahagnet published notes of the séances, signed in each case by the sitter.<sup>1</sup> On two or three occasions

<sup>1</sup> "Arcanes de la vie future dévoilés."



as a special test Adèle gave a correct description of a person unknown to her interlocutor. But striking though these results were, there are clear indications in many cases that Adèle obtained her information from no other source than the mind of the sitter. Thus, M. du Potet, a well-known writer on animal magnetism, received a very vivid and detailed description of an old friend of his : " Je croyais," he testifies, " le voir moi-même, tant le tableau en était saisissant." But on further inquiry M. du Potet found that all the correct details could have come from his own mind, whilst other details given of which he was ignorant turned out to be incorrect. A more striking proof of the real source of these messages is afforded in two other cases. Twice Adèle was consulted as to the whereabouts of men who had disappeared. In each case she professed to find the man alive, and, after giving many accurate particulars of his appearance and disposition, she went on to converse with him ; but there is a curious similarity of detail between the two accounts. Both men profess to have written home, but the letters must have miscarried. Neither can write now, because they are far from the sea, in the interior. Both have suffered much ; both have been prisoners ; both protest that their relations will see them before they die ; neither, however, is in a hurry to come back ; and neither is willing to discover the name of his present place of abiding. Adèle, in fact, committed herself to the statement that these far countries " have no names." As nothing more was ever published on the subject we may, perhaps, assume that the missing men were not heard of again. Must we also assume that Adèle's power

of communicating with the spirits of the living was restricted to persons who had gone away to distant climes to escape their relations? If Adèle was really able to communicate with the living at a distance, it can hardly be doubted that Cahagnet in the course of his many years' experiments would have furnished us with some further evidence of such a power. But if these narratives are not what they seem to be, what are we to say of the other narratives in the book, which are cast in the same dramatic form, and contain similar details harmonising with the expectations or memories of the interlocutors? If those are not authentic messages from the distant living, we require some further warrant for the assumption that these are authentic messages from the dead. Thought transference, so far as we can judge, seems a sufficient explanation, and the only consistent explanation, of these, the only cases of trance communication resembling Mrs. Piper's of which we have adequate records before the present generation.

If we compare the early and later séances of Mrs. Piper, we shall find that there has been a marked change in their character. The dramatic developments of the later séances have been sufficiently indicated in Chapters II. and IV. But when Mrs. Piper first came to this country little opportunity was afforded for the gradual development of a trance personality. A large number of sitters were introduced; Phinuit would, as a rule, be the sole control, and would pour out for the visitor's benefit a miscellaneous budget of information about his friends and relations, living or dead. In the case of the living, Phinuit simply described what he saw, as in the two

typical séances quoted in Chapter II. There was, as a rule, no pretence that the information came to him from any other source. When, however, the information related to the dead, it was frequently, but by no means invariably, given as coming directly from them. But neither the nature of the communications nor the manner of delivery afforded, as a rule, any evidence of the authenticity of the impersonation. In most of these early cases, certainly, the circumstances suggest that the impersonation of the dead was merely a conventional dramatic device, inspired generally by the beliefs or hopes of the sitter. The change in the character of the recent sittings and the remarkable and lifelike development of some of the trance personalities is, no doubt, consistent with the hypothesis of spirit control. But it would not be safe to build much upon such an argument. At the earlier sittings the main object aimed at was a rough survey of the field in order to ascertain its value. As soon as definite proof of supernormal powers of perception had been obtained, those who had charge of the séances naturally turned their attention to the more vital problems of the source of those powers and the nature of the trance personalities. They sought, in fact, to obtain evidence for the identity of the supposed spirit communicators, and in this region, above all others, demand tends to create supply.

The only test that we can apply to these earlier sittings lies in the substance of the communications themselves. The great bulk of the information given was, of course, within the knowledge of the sitter, and, apart from its dramatic form, there is no ground for assuming any other source than telepathy from his mind. But there are thirty-eight cases enumerated

by Sir Oliver Lodge in the séances of 1889—90 of information furnished by the trance intelligence which was not within the conscious knowledge of the sitter at the time.<sup>1</sup>

Of the 38 cases there are five—27, 37, 78, and two incidents in Mr. J. T. Clarke's sitting—in which the sitter explains that the facts stated had at one time been known to him. It must be assumed, therefore, that Phinuit was simply reproducing latent knowledge telepathically acquired. Of the remaining 33 cases, 12 only related to the concerns of the dead.

Of the twenty-one instances relating to the living, some five or six may probably be accounted for by latent knowledge. Four are concerned with experiments in which the trance intelligence more or less correctly described the actions of persons at a distance. In most of the remaining cases the reproduction of latent knowledge or mere guesswork on the part of the trance intelligence seem alike improbable, though, no doubt, some allowance must be made for chance coincidence. To take two of the most striking cases: Mr. Deronco, a German gentleman then resident in

<sup>1</sup> The list given in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. pp. 649—50, reckons 40 cases. For the present purpose two of these have been excluded—sitting 40, the private affairs of Edmund Gurney, because we know from Sir Oliver Lodge's later explanation that the matters communicated had come out at a previous sitting, and were therefore known to the trance intelligence (*Proceedings S.P.R.* vol. xxiii. p. 141); and sitting 47, the cuts on the watch, because it is not quite clear either that the cuts were intentionally made or that, if made intentionally, they were made as stated by the trance intelligence, since the owner was probably blind before he owned the watch. The incident can, it seems to me, hardly be used as evidence in this connection.

Cambridge and known to Mr. Myers, was informed that his brother in Germany was painting a picture. Asked if there were many figures, Phinuit said: "I see one head; it is side face." From subsequent inquiry it appeared that Mr. Deronco's brother "was at that moment painting and that the picture was a portrait of Manfred, a single figure in profile."<sup>1</sup> In another case the information is put into the mouth of Sir Oliver Lodge's deceased Aunt Anne, who said that Charley, "her Charley," had eaten "the bird, the chicken, and made himself sick. He has had a trouble with stomach . . . some kind of bird. . . . Quite sick." A subsequent letter from Sir Oliver's cousin gave the news that Charley in Manitoba had shot a prairie hen in the close season, "so we had to hide it; it was hung for about a fortnight, and a few days before Christmas we ate it, Charley eating most; the bird didn't make him ill, but he was ill at the time" (pp. 518, 520).

Of twelve instances directly connected with the dead, several which relate to trivial circumstances may, perhaps, be explained as due to the reproduction of latent memories. There are two episodes, however, one consisting of four evidential points (reckoned as four cases in the above enumeration) in which the agency of the dead is strongly suggested. The first episode is that of Dr. Rich, who purported to take control for a few minutes at a séance at which the sitter, Mr. Thompson, had a very slight acquaintance

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 628. The coincidence is the more striking because it would not appear that Mr. Deronco's brother was a professional artist—Phinuit had already described him in the same sitting as "writing a good deal," and this information is stated to be correct.



with him. He sent messages to his father, then Postmaster of Liverpool and known both to the sitter and to Sir O. Lodge, who was also present, and correctly stated—what was unknown to the sitters—that Mr. Rich, senior, occasionally suffered from slight dizziness. The whole episode seems to have been entirely characteristic and lifelike. The other episode is the appearance of Sir Oliver Lodge's uncle Jerry, who correctly described four incidents unknown to the sitter : (1) A fight in which his (living) brother Frank had fought with another boy ; (2) swimming the creek, a feat in which the same brother Frank had shared ; (3) the gift of a snake-skin to another living brother, Robert ; (4) and playing in " Smith's field " with the same brother Robert.

Sir Oliver Lodge is confident that he had never heard of these incidents from any of these uncles, so that if his recollection on this point may be trusted, the hypothesis of latent memory of the sitter must be excluded. But it will be seen that all the incidents related were, or had been, within living memories, and that one or other of the living brothers was concerned as a principal in all four instances. If " Dr. Phinuit " could see what Mr. Deronco's brother was doing in Germany, it seems not impossible that he could also see what Sir O. Lodge's Uncle Frank was thinking about in Cornwall. In the other case the sitter had some knowledge both of Dr. Rich and his father.

Again, in the séances with G. P. several pieces of information were given which were not known to the sitter at the moment—*e.g.*, the statement that the studs had been taken from the dead body by the (step-) mother, that his father had taken his photograph to

be copied, the message to Katherine Howard, and the accurate account of Mrs. Howard's doings on the previous day. This last, it will be remembered, was given in answer to a request to G. P. to see what Mrs. Howard was doing at the moment, and the nature of the information given clearly shows that it came from Mrs. Howard's mind. There is surely no justification for the assumption that G. P. acted as intermediary in tapping Mrs. Howard's memories.

If we turn to the other automatists we shall find many indications of the operation of simple telepathy in the records now under consideration. The frequent allusions in Mrs. Holland's script to Mrs. Verrall's surroundings and occupations do not seem to call for any other explanation.<sup>1</sup> Many of the cross-correspondences discussed in Chapter V., as shown, point to telepathy between the automatists. Mr. Wilson, who had two successful sittings with Mrs. Thompson (cited in Chapter III.), formed the opinion that the correct statements given were probably not derived from the dead, but arose simply as reflections in Mrs. Thompson's mind of his own thoughts and interests at the time of the sitting.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Benson, again, who had several sittings with Mrs. Thompson, found nothing to suggest communication with the dead ; but many incidents which pointed

<sup>1</sup> Miss Johnson considers that the reading of the Selwyn text (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxi. pp. 235, 252—3) suggests the agency of Myers, because it was a definite piece of association between him and Mrs. Verrall. But this very fact would tend to make it prominent in Mrs. Verrall's "automatic" mind, which, *ex hypothesi*, impressed Mrs. Holland.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. p. 129.

to reading of the mind of herself and her daughter, who was not present at the sittings. Thus, on one occasion Mrs. Thompson, on Mrs. Benson's arrival at the séance-room, mentioned that she [(Mrs. Benson)] had an engagement at 4.30. The engagement had been made at lunch immediately before. On another occasion she correctly described Mrs. Benson's daughter, as looking at her money and thinking about a wedding present.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Verrall relates nine instances with the same automatist of facts being communicated which were unknown to the sitter.<sup>2</sup> Four of these cases clearly point to telepathy from the living. Thus, on two occasions Mrs. Thompson gave to Mrs. Verrall particulars, unknown to her, of presents which Miss Verrall, then away from home, had received. On another occasion Mrs. Thompson told Miss Verrall, in Mrs. Verrall's absence, that some one called Margaret (Mrs. Verrall's name) would give her a trinket to wear on her watch-chain if she asked for it. Mrs. Verrall had actually marked in a shop catalogue a pendant which she proposed to give her daughter as a Christmas present.<sup>3</sup> In the fourth case some correct details were given about a locket sent to Mrs. Verrall by her sister. In none of these four cases, as Mrs. Verrall points out, was there any reason to suppose "that any dead person knew the facts or was interested in them. Nor did Nelly claim to have become possessed of the information through any other means than her own."

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xviii. pp. 278—9.

<sup>2</sup> A tenth instance is referred to but not described, as being too private to quote.

<sup>3</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. pp. 175—6.

The other five incidents related to the family of Mr. A., who, with his wife, had two sittings. The information given concerned the habits of an old lady, still living, and of Mrs. A.'s deceased mother. All the facts stated, though not known to Mr. A., were in the knowledge of his sisters, with one exception. This one exception was as follows : It was stated that Mr. A.'s mother had kept a receipt-book, and that it contained not only cookery receipts but a receipt for pomatum ; the daughter knew of the book, but not of the receipt for pomatum. It was eventually found, after some searching, in the middle of the book.<sup>1</sup> Even here the hypothesis of latent memory on the part of Mr. A.'s sister cannot be excluded.

The analysis of these cases where information unknown to the sitter was given by the trance intelligence scarcely adds strength to the hypothesis of spirit communication. In every case the information given was, or may have been, within the knowledge of some living mind. In many cases all the circumstances point to some form of telepathy between the distant agent and the trance intelligence, mediated, as it would seem in all cases, by the presence of a common acquaintance in the person of the sitter. It is true that we have little or no experimental evidence for telepathy, of this complicated form, but neither have we experimental evidence for the action of the spirits of the dead. That a disembodied spirit should be able to read the mind of a living person at a distance can only seem more probable because we know nothing about disembodied spirits, and our fancy is free to dower them with any powers we choose, whereas we do

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xvii. pp. 177—83.

know, or think we know, the limitations of our poor human faculties.

The trance personalities, then, have never told us anything which was not possibly, scarcely anything which was not probably, within the knowledge of some living person. None of the "posthumous" letters have yet been read. Twice only have the messages received through the automatists been held to justify the opening of a posthumous letter, and in each case the automatist's version has proved wholly wide of the mark.<sup>1</sup> Nor has the Hodgson control yet revealed the secret of his cipher.

These facts do not, of course, constitute an insuperable objection to the hypothesis of spirit communication. The hypothetical conditions of communication between the other world and this by means of a kind of partial reincarnation may, as suggested by Hodgson long ago, be such as to confuse and impair the intelligence of the spirit wishing to communicate; or, if we discard even this modified form of the possession theory, our terrestrial experience is sufficient to show that telepathy is a very uncertain means of communication. Evidence derived from dramatic verisimilitude should, no doubt, be largely discounted, since the dream-self is unquestionably a first-rate actor; but, when all allowances are made, it is difficult not to feel impressed by some of the utterances of the Hodgson control, especially the "Buying Billy" incident, the little drama of shaking the fist at Mrs. James, and the Putnam-Bowditch episode. The Hodgson

<sup>1</sup> One of these cases has already been cited in Chapter III. The other case, which occurred some years ago, is described in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. p. 657, and vol. viii. p. 69, *seq.*



cipher message to Mrs. Holland also carries some weight. In the case of the Myers control the reminiscences of the "Æneid" and the "Lethe" incident<sup>1</sup> seem to me most significant. There is, too, the curious fact that Mrs. Piper has occasionally recognised photographs of the supposed control. She selected a photograph of G. P. out of several others, and on a later occasion, after a series of communications purporting to come from one Joseph Marble, in the waking stage of the trance she picked out his photograph from among several others, with the exclamation "That is the man I saw!"<sup>2</sup>

Now, Mrs. Piper had only once seen G. P., at a single sitting held four years before his death, and then did not know his name; and Mr. Marble she had never seen at all. Of course, again, the incident is explicable on the assumption that the sitters conceived the visual image of the deceased with sufficient vividness to impress it on Mrs. Piper's mind;<sup>3</sup> and for telepathy in this form we have some direct experimental proof.

Another line of argument which has much impressed me personally, and which seems calculated to help forward the solution of the problem, is that outlined by Hodgson in his report of 1898.<sup>3</sup> The argument may be roughly summarised as follows: If all the successful messages are the result of telepathy, between the sitter and the medium, we should expect to find that the hits group themselves round particular sitters. As a matter of fact, speaking from an inti-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xxiii. p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xiii.; see especially pp. 391—395.

mate and unrivalled knowledge of all the communications recorded up to that date, Hodgson claimed that the true messages tended to group themselves, not round particular sitters, but round particular communicators and classes of communicators. He found that persons who had committed suicide, or who had died after suffering from prolonged bodily weakness or extreme mental disturbance, showed themselves weak and confused communicators. On the other hand, he found that the best communicators were some young children recently deceased, and two or three adults, notably G. P., who died by an accident in the prime of a healthy and vigorous life. Hodgson puts forward this theory tentatively, and indicates it as a promising line for further investigation. Some recent observations certainly tend to confirm his view. Of the communicators of the last few years none has produced so vivid an impression of a living personality behind the veil as Richard Hodgson himself. Next to him comes F. W. H. Myers, but in this case the impression is produced less by his personal than by his intellectual qualities.

The facts here are undoubted. But, perhaps, we should expect such a result on any theory. Richard Hodgson in his lifetime was a strongly coloured, many-sided personality, with a lot of loose energy to spend in various by-products, and a genius for friendship. Such a man was calculated to impress a vivid image of himself and all his sayings and doings, likes and dislikes, upon the memory of his friends, and if telepathy requires, as it appears to do, a certain degree of emotional temperature, that very fact should make them good sitters. Successes would still group them-

selves round the man who had an abundant life, just because his life had abounded. George Pelham would seem to have been a man of much the same make as Hodgson—a man of many keen interests and warm friendships. Myers, even more than the personal regard which he inspired, left a deep intellectual impress on all who came in contact with him. For similar reasons suicides and persons who died after lingering illness or mental disturbance would be unlikely to leave vivid and productive memories behind them.

The most promising line of inquiry, however, at the present time would seem to consist in the possible indications of a directing and organising intelligence to be found by careful comparison of the scripts of several automatists. I have dealt with the argument, so far as the present state of the evidence and my own understanding of it would permit, in the chapter on cross-correspondences, and in the discussion, at the beginning of the present chapter, on the interpretation to be put on the allusion apparently contained in Mrs. Verrall's script to Mr. Piddington's posthumous letter. The evidence so far presented will not, it seems, admit of a positive conclusion. But even whilst the investigation is still incomplete it is clear that the results so far attained are worth all the labour that has been spent upon them. If a final verdict must be deferred until further investigation shall have enlightened our ignorance, and shall enable us to give a decisive answer to the question whether these dark sayings proceed from the dead or the living, we need not wait to recognise that even now there are other, if perhaps less momentous, issues involved which concern our immediate interests. In the history of mankind there

have been many crusades which, missing what seemed the highest good, have yet won something worth the pains, not for those who took part in them, but for the later generations which have entered into the fruit of their labours. Out of the long and tedious search, renewed generation after generation, for the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, has come the wonder-working science of modern chemistry. The seekers in the present case may have been fooled by visionary gold, but at least they have been digging a very fruitful vineyard. These enigmatic utterances have been recorded with all the precision demanded in a scientific inquiry. The conditions and circumstances are set down with scrupulous candour and care. The exhaustive editorial comment places the reader in as favourable a position to estimate their significance as the experimenters themselves. No person who carefully studies the records would think it possible to attribute all these numerous and well-attested coincidences to fraudulent design or the mere chance association of ideas. If we reject, for the present, at any rate, the explanation suggested by many of the utterances themselves, that of communication from the dead, we must seek for some other cause adequate to the effects. There remains only the agency which has been provisionally named telepathy, but which no one has yet ventured to define in other than negative terms, as communication apart from the recognised sensory channels. The establishment of such a faculty, if only as the vestige of a primitive mode of sensibility, now superseded by articulate speech, would surely be a result worth all the labour spent in the vineyard: a fruitage which would go far to compensate for the loss of that, perhaps visionary, gold.

## NOTE

The Introductory chapter is based on an article which was published in the *Independent Review* in May, 1904 ; and part of the chapter on Cross-Correspondences has already appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* of September, 1909. I have to acknowledge the courtesy which permits republication.

F. P.



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